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REVIEW

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Cover photograph by Susan Nevelson

Notes on Contributors:

BRUCE BOYD, a former member of the Venice West community, has returned to Berkeley. E. M. CIORAN, who comes from Rumania, has made his home in Paris since 1939. "On a Certain Experience of Death" is taken from his most recent volume: *La Tentation d'exister.* ROBERT CREELEY, poet, short story writer, and teacher, edits the *Black Mountain Review.* GANGADHAR GADGIL was born in 1923, and teaches at the University of Bombay. He writes his stories in Marathi and in English. PAUL JOHNSON was born in 1935; he has recently completed a novel based on his experiences in Mexico. "Porky" is his first published story. Five of FRANZ KLINE's paintings are included in the Museum of Modern Art's New American Painting exhibition now being shown in Europe. FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA's *Comedies and Tragicomedies* is scheduled for publication in 1959 by New Directions. MIKE MCCLURE is 25 years old. We printed a group of his poems in our "San Francisco Scene" issue. JAMES O. MITCHELL is a young photographer who specializes in the New York scene. FRANK O'HARA, whose book of poems, *Meditations in an Emergency,* was published last year, is on the staff of the Museum of Modern Art. ANDRÉ PIEYRE DE MANDIARGUES' novel, *The Girl Beneath the Lion,* was recently published by Grove Press. JOHN RECHY is a young writer from El Paso. His story, "Mardi Gras," appeared in our fifth issue. E. S. SELDON is completing his re-evaluation of Sade's contribution to modern thought. Several of GARY SNYDER's versions of the Cold Mountain poems were first published in *Combustion.* "Aspects of Japanese Culture" is taken from DR. DAISETZ T. SUZUKI's forthcoming *Zen Buddhism in Japanese Art* (Bollingen). ALEXANDER TROCCHI, former editor of *Merlin,* is completing his *Cain's Book,* a section of which was printed in our fourth issue. AMOS VOGEL originated and heads Cinema 16 and has written extensively on film for many magazines. DOUGLAS WOOLF is a New Yorker who has settled in Phoenix, Arizona. Grove Press will publish his second novel, *Fade Out,* in the spring.

ANDRE PIEYRE DE MANDIARGUES: Childishness

For some time, a long time now, Jean de Juni had been toiling over a girl with dyed-blonde hair whom he had approached in the street for this purpose, taken by the hand, led to the hotel, pushed ahead of him from the doorway to the desk and to the foot of the staircase between walls of pink and black tile, then up the red-carpeted steps, before making her enter a bedroom where the shutters were closed by iron bars permanently fixed deep in the wood, as if across a cell window in some ancient lunatic asylum. Outside, the sun prevailed oppressively, turning the stones fiery, the asphalt soft. There was no one in the streets where just before there had been only a dazed girl and Jean de Juni. Not a dog, not a cat, not a bird, not even a rat or a little mouse among the rubbish of the marketplace. It would be late afternoon before the first human noises could be heard in the streets, along with the strident sound of the shop-grilles being raised and the clatter of the water buckets that would be used to cool off the sidewalks in front of grocery stores. The hotel, like the city, was silent, dedicated to the siesta. The clerk, scarcely rousing himself to hand over the key, must have gone back to sleep on the couch behind the desk.

The girl's attitude and conduct were on the whole similar to those of a big doll made of some elastic material, had a doll been subjected to the same operation. She did not speak, she did not move any more than a doll would have, and her eyes stayed obstinately shut beneath the short bangs, in the hollow of the pillow into which her face had sunk rather deep. If the girl wasn't asleep too, it would have been no different if she were. Furthermore, Jean de Juni did not attempt to draw words from a witless mouth, nor to provoke signs of emotion which would have given him only the annoyance of having to respond. He arched the upper part of his body a little and rested one elbow on the hard bolster, above the pillow, holding his chin in his

hand in order not to press with all his weight on the patient girl beneath him; unless, without so much courtesy, he assumed this position to limit to the indispensable, that is, to the lower areas, the points of contact between his body and his partner's. The noise of the bed sounded like a printing press, but one in an old-fashioned printshop that might have run off some local gazette, in the south or on an island, with typography of an oddly modern-style face. By its very perseverance and regularity, this sound, again recalling that of a machine, managed to become a part of the silence. Rather than disturbing the sleep of the hotel's occupants, it must have soothed them, and perhaps they would awaken when they no longer heard it. Jean de Juni felt himself capable of continuing until nightfall, in order to prolong his neighbors' siesta in the surrounding rooms, on condition that the girl persisted in her indifference and her apathy. "I'm making love," he told himself with no satisfaction, at a certain point. And he thought how inadequate the little sentence was, its laughable modesty giving no indication whatever to an ignorant listener or an uninitiated reader of the task virility had set itself. French, Spanish, or Italian would have furnished him with briefer, more expressive forms whose sense is generally that of thrusting in a tool or, better still, pounding home a nail. Then was he working at driving a nail (his nail) into this girl? He would have answered no, that it was more of a question of something like the slow passage across a warm sea on an old piston-driven steamer, the S.S. *Eros,* the archipelago mailboat, flying, as well it might, the blue and white flag inherited by Greece from the royal house of Bavaria. The air in this shuttered room perfectly recalled the oily smell of the ship's corridor, the smell of lice in the woodwork of the cabins below decks. And as for love?

Well, love, a giant of salt raised in limitless expectation, a crystalline colossus shaped like a mantis, an empusa, a white statue loftier than the highest Himalayan peak, a terrifying personage creating its own solitude, "above all," Jean de Juni

thought, "I hope I never meet love; even in dreams I hope it never turns its hideous flat, triangular head towards me; I hope I shall never be subject to its greedy gaze!" Then he smiled at such alarms without having interrupted his pumping nor hastened or retarded its rhythm. The girl's eyelids had remained closed, and she did not know that he had smiled; she was unaware he had imagined this monster.

The word in other forms, as a verb, for instance, was related to images and objects that were not so formidable. It suggested oily water, almost stagnant and rather tepid. Doubtless Jean de Juni had loved his mother, whose memory remained linked to a certain mauve dressing-gown she wore in the morning, and he still remembered a swamp tortoise, or, as it was called, a mudder, that had been bought for him from an old man who was selling them in front of the Cathedral porch of Modena. With the others crawling around at the bottom of a basket, his tortoise must have been caught in the canals of the Po. It was an extremely large male which little Jean de Juni fed with strips of raw meat, preferably chicken or veal, or else liver, and which he cared for with a tenderness whose mysterious origin was somehow identified with the name "mudder" which the dictionary had revealed to him. The tortoise had escaped into the *campagna,* profiting from a command shouted to Jean de Juni that he go make his bow to some visitors, one afternoon, and then, a few days later, how horrible it was! he had recognized its lovely black and yellow carapace in some scraps scattered by the roadside, crushed under the wheel of a truck perhaps, if not by bricks (there were some fragments nearby) thrown by some cruel child.

To a child, other children are the executioners of everything he loves.

Yet the worst moment of his life, all the same, had been when he witnessed the butchering of a hog he had adopted on a mountain farm in Switzerland. Whenever he disappeared and they came to look for him, that summer, he could always be

found in front of the little sty where the animal lived, adjoining the farmer's chalet. He brought the creature rapeseed and potatoes, hard pears and all kinds of garbage, amazed by its prodigious gluttony. Then the day of its death had come, and the farmer, despite the child's entreaties and tears, had refused, of course, to spare it. Laughing besides, explaining that the animal had reached the desired point for meat and lard, and that any delay would cost a lot of money. So Jean de Juni had decided he would watch this hog die, since it was not within his power to save it.

Less tragically, more dimly, he also remembered loving an axolotl during the last years of his childhood. The pudgy little batrachian, muffled in its own gills like some precious and indecent pink foliage, clumsily maneuvering among the aquarium plants, diving to the bottom to dig a worm out of the mud, rising to gulp down the mites he tossed on the surface of the water, had given him long moments of happiness before giving him the grief of its death. Since then, as well as he could remember, Jean de Juni had not loved anyone or anything again. Strangely, death had pillaged his childhood with a kind of fury, and then, the plunder made, had seemed to turn away from those around him in order to make all its raids on other circles. Perhaps the reason for this was that for a very long time he had had around him only creatures and objects he regarded with such indifference that it was as if he were living in complete solitude, absolute penury, as if he had chosen some eremitic discipline.

And now, once more after so many other times, here he was, as the phrase had it, 'thinking about his dead.' "I've chosen a funny moment for it," he reminded himself.

For he was still pumping with the same imperturbable rhythm, as exact at that of a Swiss clock, as if a mechanism had been set in his loins to measure by the tempo of his thrusts the erosion of life and the approach of that death which he had just evoked with a touch of humor. He realized that these

measurements were of an equivalent importance for the girl as well, and that (did she know it?) what they were doing together had the curious property of aligning each of their tempi against the other's in imitation of their superimposed bodies, until the instant, doubtless still far off, when the mechanism would stop by itself and the coincidence cease. It was of no consequence whatever that the girl refused or neglected to participate in the movement, since she submitted to it and since either by consent or by force she felt the regular strokes of the controlling organism. Jean de Juni thought how she was the matrix of this common tempo of theirs, and how he was playing the part of the die-punch. Thus the machine was well defined; it could function, with the help of the gods, until the end of time itself. The word matrix carried no connotation for him, as it should have, of a possible birth. In truth, the past and death prevailed upon him so tyrannically that life, in his meditation, reduced itself to its own decay, and he gave no heed to the future.

He wondered whether it was with a prostitute that he was beguiling the passage of the hours. Without being able to decide, for if she had followed him docilely enough at his first invitation, and if she had agreed to come to the hotel and walk upstairs into a bedroom with him, there had not once come up between them the question of the "little present." Nor of anything else, furthermore, no more of what they were about to do (of what they were doing now) than of hunger, of thirst, or of satiety, of sadness, of gaiety, or of eternal damnation. Judging her character from the reactions she displayed, it was not unjust to see in his partner a creature infinitely approaching nullity, furnished with an agreeably irregular little face, all the same, with a firm body and a smooth epidermis. What more could he hope for in such an adventure? He thought again (the case being a little less ordinary than that of a prostitute) that perhaps he was dealing with a victim of sunstroke, or with a girl so stupefied by the heat that she was no longer capable of walking by herself, of protecting herself. The cities of the south, when

everyone takes his siesta and the streets are empty, provide such prey as a recompense for the wolf that persists in hunting despite the heat and the sultriness. He recalled many such encounters, and how he had exploited them.

Later, his thoughts blurred. His mind tended toward a kind of zero point, as if for some mystical union with his companion's nullity. This point was situated rather precisely in space; it was in front of him, to the left, on the copper ball that decorated the enameled iron bedpost here as at the other three corners. The bed being in the corner, Jean de Juni had walls on his right and in front of him, the window on his left, slightly behind. His sense of position resisted a while before leaving him, a last lamp blown out (and the smoke sucked up by the wind), but disappeared at last, and our man was nothing more than rhythm, active trepidation, the sound of a spring-mattress dominating a silent country, a movement of loins coming and going in the half-light.

Now the sun, outside, had reached the hotel's façade. When it struck the shutter, a nick close to the hinge let in a ray of light that made a luminous spot on the wall in the shape of a banana or a scythe blade. Jean de Juni paid no attention, absorbed as he was in body by his pumping and in mind by his vacancy point, and he also did not notice that this sickle of light was very slowly changing position and moving nearer the bed. Suddenly it reached the gilded copper ball which immediately glowed beneath his unconscious eyes; it was like a flare which burst within his memory and awakened it, illuminating and reviving recollections so remote they had not occurred to him for thirty years or more. Passing over the copper (which might just as well have cast him among the Cyprian antiquities), he recognized a great ball which was a bouquet of mountain buttercups, carefully rounded and held in two hands on a long black skirt, before a severe blouse closed at the neck with a little garnet brooch, and behind the bouquet, above the brooch, he found the face of his nurse Nina, whom he had called

Criticona, in imitation of his mother, ever since the first words he had stammered and until the beginning of his age of forgetfulness and unreason. Nina Criticona, the old Triestine governess, whom he had loved, he remembered it perfectly, more than his parents, more than his tortoise, more than that hog, and more than his axolotl! Nina who adored him even while she scolded him, and who, in the vain hope of making him put on weight, cooked him rose jellies in the Dalmatian fashion.

Everything fell into place again, starting from the yellow sphere, as if there had been an electromagnet inside, and once the current was on the fragments of a great mobile dial mounted on iron legs had leaped into position and were beginning to function, each attached to another by magnetic attraction. Jean de Juni, without ceasing to be a kind of metronome beating time against the impassible girl's belly, and without once losing track of what he was doing, saw again the child he had been, three years old perhaps, four at the most, a child whom he had believed as completely obliterated from his own memory as from anyone else's (excepting Nina's, if she was not dead). A sickly child, looking still thinner because of the long chestnut curls that reached almost to his shoulders, wearing a white velvet overcoat and an ermine bonnet more like a woman's or a girl's hat than any boy's, his legs encased in pale-green woolen stockings that made him look, according to old Criticona, like a marsh bird she called "Sir Dotterel." Another avatar: he discovered himself in this child, and when he lifted his head it was through those childish eyes that he contemplated Nina Criticona's somewhat leonine, tender face, her blue gaze, both sad and gay at once, her round, palely mottled cheeks, her gray hair beneath a black plush hat fastened to her bun by jade hatpins. She was keeping a close watch on him, careful that he did not play too near the edge of the road behind which the ground fell steeply away, and that he did not fall a victim to the clumsiness habitual to the scions of very rich families.

For they were together on a road leading down the moun-

tainside from the village where they visited the little shops, one expensive, one cheap, passing before the resthome where they were staying, winding sharply before joining the highway at the bottom of the valley. It had rained all night, all the day before, and the only place that was at all dry was this turn in the road, a natural balcony or landing worked into the mountain, with a bench on the stony ground where you could sit and look at the view. Nina Criticona, whenever the weather was clear enough, led the *bambino* in her charge up here. She had persuaded him, perhaps to make him take more exercise, that their walks must always furnish some windfall, at least a bouquet, worthy of being enshrined in their bedroom, and on the way home, disregarding the municipal placards in defense of the alpine flora, they rarely refrained from picking flowers.

As for this last word "flowers," still fresh from childhood despite so many years wasted in a life of trivial debauch, Jean de Juni would have liked to hide it away, and with a powerful movement of his loins he thrust it deep into the oozing bowels of the girl beneath him, who did not even wince, though the brutality of the stroke nearly broke the rhythm she was patiently enduring. But it was too late to return to a reality so commonplace; the old images triumphed all down the line. Again he saw the curve in the road where he had played as a child, again saw the pebbles of the slope down which the seepages had washed the loose soil into the stream, and in the stream itself, on a bank of black sand or mud, he saw what looked like a bed of slender, yellow-flowered asparagus, which were actually tussilagos, still without their broad leaves that come after the flowers and which account for the plant's common name of "coltsfoot." He saw the pinkish cowslips clustered at the foot of the slope on a rich mound, the brilliant green of their leaves spreading over the wet soil. While he was poking among them with the tip of a tiny horn-handled cane (the horn was chamois, silver-ringed), bought for him in the expensive shop, Criticona had stood up from the bench, leaving behind her umbrella and her workbag,

but taking up the bouquet they had picked and which a breath of wind might have blown away. The child crossed the road. He was near her, beneath the bunch of buttercups, and she was holding him with her other hand because they were at the cliff's edge.

A few curves farther down, between the larches that were beginning to turn green again, a big covered cart drawn by a team of oxen was climbing toward them with a calm power that seemed to unroll the road like a ribbon, smoothing it out as they advanced before leaving it behind to trail all the way down to the valley floor. The cart would disappear and come into view again two or three times before reaching the top, it would turn, pressing close against the slope, it would continue at the same lumbering pace until it reached the village, and would not stop there. "It's a Piedmontese wagon," Criticona had said. "Poor people coming from the other side of the mountains to work on the new dam. They live under that canvas roof with their wives and their children, their animals too, dogs and maybe chickens. The cart is their house, like the gypsies. It's better for them than the cabins in the construction camps, and they don't have to pay the builders." A very dark man was guiding the team, walking ahead of the oxen and occasionally touching one or the other with a long stick, speaking to them in a voice whose rough accent and gentle intonation could be heard despite the noise of the waterfalls.

Little Jean de Juni could not take his eyes off this man leading the great horned beasts. "A Piedmontese," he repeated after Criticona, to fix the mysterious name in his head and to be sure not to forget it. The man was wearing a rather dirty red shirt, open despite the cold air to show a tanned chest, and a black handkerchief around his neck; his wild hair was a dazzling black. Little Jean thought he should describe this man to Criticona, who did not see very well even with glasses, so she could share his admiration; then he decided he would say nothing and keep the marvelous spectacle for himself. Nevertheless he re-

sisted his governess who was trying to pull him away from the edge. Then the terrible thing happened (which left on the child's mind an indelible impression, since it would re-emerge down to the least detail, like a lithograph sprinkled with water, so many years after the event).

This is how it was. At the end of the wooded zone, the Piedmontese wagon had entered an area where there were larches and brushwood above the road only, and stunted besides, while the slope below ran almost vertically downward for over a hundred yards. A stream fell which in normal weather a few gutters made of hollow logs almost managed to contain, but which was everywhere overflowing after the recent showers. The roadway was dark in color, without visible pebbles or gravel, probably consisting of many seasons' deposit of rotten pine needles. Little Jean de Juni, when the wagon was at the narrowest point of the dark passage between the slope and the precipice, saw that one of the oxen, the one pulling on the left, had suddenly shied and was throwing itself against its yokefellow as if it had gone wild. The creature had felt the ground, saturated by the overflowing gutters, give way beneath its weight; it was trying to gain a surer foothold and doubtless would have succeeded, aided by the other, which had instinctively understood the danger, if the team had been alone or yoked to a less clumsy, lighter load. But when the lumbering vehicle's wheels reached the place where the stream's cleft was, the ground caved in altogether, as if it had been mined. Then little Jean saw the wagon's hood wobble and capsize completely, and the wagon, sliding backwards, fell over the edge with the crumbled earth while the whole shaft rose up into the air, carrying the poor oxen with it, moving their heads and feet ridiculously for a moment, like great beetles wriggling in agony on a pin. There were no cries or bellowings; the waterfalls' racket had drowned them out, if there had been any. The black man, the leader, was safe. He had thrown himself flat on his face, he was rolling over the ground, it looked as if he were biting it. Then

the child could no longer see, a slightly roughened hand covered his eyes. "Little Jean, don't look," Nina Criticona said. "You are too young to see death."

Jean de Juni continued to pump as he might have winnowed grain or broken stones, the rhythmic brutality of the operation leaving his imagination free rein. He thought how he had just lived again (or rather seen again in imagination, which is almost the same thing) the earliest episode to leave a mark on his deepest consciousness. The notion of a "first memory" is curious, forever disturbing to reflection. Jean de Juni had the idea, suggested perhaps by his old Criticona's words and her affectionately protective gesture, that the ring of his existence was within an inch of closing ("a slipknot!" he mused), and that he would find himself in danger of death if he slackened his labor or failed to distribute its regular pulsations with the same exactitude. This idea soon vanished, but it had still further attenuated (if that was possible) the long travail of love.

The gilded copper ball opposite him was still shining in the sunbeam with as much brilliance as before, while his loins were moving mechanically, driving up and down the flail (or the stonebreaker's hammer) with the same force still, and in the proper cadence. Instead of drawing closer to an erotic pleasure, he knew that he was moving from it now, as if the old Greek steamer evoked at the beginning of his revery had changed its course in order to return to its port of embarkation. At the same time Jean de Juni was vaguely satisfied, he had to admit, that there was no longer any question of attaining such pleasure, nor of landing in that wearisome country which was its destination. He attempted to revive the terrifying memory (which was already less so), and again recalled, voluntarily this time, the catastrophe on the mountain road. As he attempted to reconstruct it, and the Piedmontese wagon and the oxen falling together into the chasm were reconstituted before his eyes, he felt singularly exalted, experiencing (without being able to account for it in any other reasonable way except by some play

of equilibriums, the operation of a pair of balances) a kind of grandiose elevation, glorious, even solar, sustained neither more nor less than his childhood climbs up a haystack or a heap of stones had been by Nina Criticona's firm hand. During this radiant course that lifted him high on the recoil from the accident into the very heaven of his childhood, the rather leonine features of his governess etched themselves as if superimposed, with unmistakable clarity, upon the face of the sun. Jean de Juni discovered once more the benevolent expression that was habitually in her eyes when she looked at him, and was moved as he had not been for a long, long time. Was this, finally, love? "Father sun . . ." he said in a very low voice, at the moment when the old nurse's countenance totally eclipsed the globe of fire.

So high did he feel that he let his arms bend a moment, since there was no longer any need for support, and his chest fell against the girl's breasts. She opened her eyes and seeing how remote he was, called to him as if she wanted him closer to her. "Come," she said to him, "haven't you gone far enough? Where do you think you're heading for, galloping hard enough to break down your poor horsey? Stop and come here now. Stop, get down, put your head on my shoulder, rest a little. You need it, and I'm worn out too." But he did not hear what she was saying, and she had become invisible to him, although she was directly beneath his gaze. He had stiffened his arms again, his whole body was rigid and in a state of utter insensibility, his mind entirely free of that obsession with death which habitually dominated him and left the haggard man in peace only when his steps led him to this questionable adventure, this disreputable hotel bedroom, this delusive bed. A dreamer recalled (perhaps afflicted with some tetanic infection), he found himself at the zenith of a clear sky and mounting still higher, proceeding toward a warm good sun which was also the face of Nina Criticona, leaning on a support which was the hand she gave him as she used to in the past. The girl was silent now, she had closed her

eyes again, patient as before since it was impossible to have the least communication with him. Although she had been, on the whole, the instrument of his ecstasy, he had quite forgotten her, flung her back into the shadow with the vanished wagon, and the persistent rhythm of his loins henceforth had no other purpose than to bear him always further and higher into this admirable recovered purity, this sky, this luminous crystal where there was nothing to fear unless the sun should withdraw. "Criticona, old Criticona, don't leave me alone . . ." he repeated softly, like a child about to fall asleep.

—Translated by Richard Howard

FRANK O'HARA: In Memory of My Feelings

to Grace Hartigan

1

My quietness has a man in it, he is transparent
and he carries me quietly, like a gondola, through the streets.
He has several likenesses, like stars and years, like numerals.

My quietness has a number of naked selves,
so many pistols I have borrowed to protect myselves
from creatures who too readily recognize my weapons
and have murder in their heart!
though in winter
they are warm as roses, in the desert
taste of chilled anisette.
At times, withdrawn,
I rise into the cool skies
and gaze on at the imponderable world with the simple identificatio
of my colleagues, the mountains. Manfred climbs to my nape,
speaks, but I do not hear him,
I'm too blue.
An elephant takes up his trumpet,
money flutters from the windows of cries, silk stretching its mirror
across shoulder blades. A gun is "fired."
One of me rushes
to window #13 and one of me raises his whip and one of me
flutters up from the center of the track amidst the pink flamingoes,
and underneath their hooves as they round the last turn my lips
are scarred and brown, brushed by tails, masked in dirt's lust,
definition, open mouths gasping for the cries of the bettors for the lung
of earth.

So many of my transparencies could not resist the race!

Terror in earth, dried mushrooms, pink feathers, tickets,
a flaking moon drifting across the muddied teeth,
the imperceptible moan of covered breathing,
love of the serpent!
I am underneath its leaves as the hunter crackles and pants
and bursts, as the barrage-balloon drifts behind a cloud
and animal death whips out its flashlight,
whistling
and slipping the glove off the trigger hand. The serpent's eyes
redden at sight of those thorny fingernails, he is so smooth!
My transparent selves
flail about like vipers in a pail, writhing and hissing
without panic, with a certain justice of response
and presently the aquiline serpent comes to resemble the Medusa.

2
The dead hunting
and the alive, ahunted.
My father, my uncle,
my grand-uncle and the several aunts. My
grand-aunt dying for me, like a talisman, in the war,
before I had even gone to Borneo
her blood vessels rushed to the surface
and burst like rockets over the wrinkled
invasion of the Australians, her eyes aslant
like the invaded, but blue like mine.
An atmosphere of supreme lucidity,
humanism,
the mere existence of emphasis,
a rusted barge
painted orange against the sea
full of Marines reciting the Arabian ideas
which are a proof in themselves of seasickness
which is a proof in itself of being hunted.
A hit? *ergo* swim.

My 10, my 19,
my 9, and the several years. My
12 years since they all died, philosophically speaking.
And now the coolness of a mind
like a shuttered suite in the Grand Hotel
where mail arrives for my incognito,
whose façade
has been slipping into the Grand Canal for centuries;
rockets splay over a *sposalizio*,
fleeing into night
from their Chinese memories, and it is a celebration,
the trying desperately to count them as they die.
But who will stay to be these numbers
when all the lights are dead?

3

The most arid stretch is often richest,
the hand lifting towards a fig tree from hunger
digging
and there is water, clear, supple, or there
deep in the sand where death sleeps, a murmurous bubbling
proclaims the blackness that will ease and burn.
You preferred the Arabs? but they didn't stay to count
their inventions, racing into sands, converting themselves into
so many,
embracing, at Ramadan, the tenderest effigies of
themselves with penises shorn by the hundreds, like a camel
ravishing a goat.
And the mountainous-minded Greeks could speak
of time as a river and step across it into Persia, leaving the pain
at home to be converted into statuary. I adore the Roman copies.
And the stench of the camel's spit I swallow,
and the stench of the whole goat. For we have advanced, France,
together into a new land, like the Greeks, where one feels nostalgic
for mere ideas, where truth lies on its death-bed like an uncle

and one of me has a sentimental longing for number,
as has another for the ball gowns of the Directoire and yet
another for "Destiny, Paris, destiny!"

or "Only a king may kill a king."

How many selves are there in a war hero asleep in names? under
a blanket of platoon and fleet, orderly. For every seaman
with one eye closed in fear and twitching arm at a sigh for Lord Nelson,
he is all dead; and now a meek subaltern writhes in his bedclothes
with the fury of a thousand, violating an insane mistress
who has only herself to offer his multitudes.

Rising,
he wraps himself in the burnoose of memories against the heat of life
and over the sands he goes to take an algebraic position *in re*
a sun of fear shining not too bravely. He will ask himselves to vote
on fear before he feels a tremor,

as runners arrive from the mountains
bearing snow, proof that the mind's obsolescence is still capable
of intimacy. His mistress will follow him across the desert
like a goat, towards a mirage which is something familiar about
one of his innumerable wrists,

and lying in an oasis one day,
playing catch with coconuts, they suddenly smell oil.

4

Beneath these lives
the ardent lover of history hides,

tongue out
leaving a globe of spit on a taut spear of grass
and leaves off rattling his tail a moment
to admire this flag.

I'm looking for my Shanghai Lil.
Five years ago, enamored of fire-escapes, I went to Chicago,
an eventful trip: the fountains! the Art Institute, the Y
for both sexes, absent Christianity.

At 7, before Jane
was up, the copper lake stirred against the sides
of a Norwegian freighter; on the deck a few dirty men,
tired of night, watched themselves in the water
as years before the German prisoners on the *Prinz Eugen*
dappled the Pacific with their sores, painted purple
by a Naval doctor.

Beards growing, and the constant anxiety
over looks. I'll shave before she wakes up. Sam Goldwyn
spent $2,000,000 on Anna Sten, but Grushenka left America.
One of me is standing in the waves, an ocean bather,
or I am naked with a plate of devils at my hip.

Grace
to be born and live as variously as possible. The conception
of the masque barely suggests the sordid identifications.
I am a Hittite in love with a horse. I don't know what blood's
in me I feel like an African prince I am a girl walking downstairs
in a red pleated dress with heels I am a champion taking a fall
I am a jockey with a sprained ass-hole I am the light mist

in which a face appears
and it is another face of blonde I am a baboon eating a banana
I am a dictator looking at his wife I am a doctor eating a child
and the child's mother smiling I am a Chinaman climbing a moun
I am a child smelling his father's underwear I am an Indian
sleeping on a scalp

and my pony is stamping in the birches,
and I've just caught sight of the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Mari*

What land is this, so free?

I watch
the sea at the back of my eyes, near the spot where I think
in solitude as pine trees groan and support the enormous winds,
they are humming *L'Oiseau de feu*!

They look like gods, these whitem
and they are bringing me the horse I fell in love with on the frieze.

5

And now it is the serpent's turn.
I am not quite you, but almost, the opposite of visionary.
You are coiled around the central figure,
the heart
that bubbles with red ghosts, since to move is to love
and the scrutiny of all things is syllogistic,
the startled eyes of the dikdik, the bush full of white flags
fleeing a hunter,
which is our democracy
but the prey
is always fragile and like something, as a seashell can be
a great Courbet, if it wishes. To bend the ear of the outer world.
When you turn your head
can you feel your heels, undulating? that's what it is
to be a serpent. I haven't told you of the most beautiful things
in my lives, and watching the ripple of their loss disappear
along the shore, underneath ferns,
face downward in the ferns
my body, the naked host to my many selves, shot
by a guerrilla warrior or dumped from a car into ferns
which are themselves *journalière*.
The hero, trying to unhitch his parachute,
stumbles over me. It is our last embrace.
And yet
I have forgotten my loves, and chiefly that one, the cancerous
statue which my body could no longer contain,
against my will
against my love
become art,
I could not change it into history
and so remember it,
and I have lost what is always and everywhere
present, the scene of my selves, the occasion of these ruses,
which I myself and singly must now kill
and save the serpent in their mid

PAUL JOHNSON: Porky

When they left the pastures and walked between the first thick bunches of stunted pines and saplings, the moon was gone immediately, and they had to switch on their flashlight to see at all. In a few minutes, their pantlegs were soaked through and bitterly cold, from the dew on the kneedeep grass in the ruts of the old logging road. They walked with short, dragging steps, bent far forward to avoid the overlapping branches and clinging spider bridges, one behind the other. Their dogs trotted cautiously on ahead, snapping dry twigs underfoot, rustling dead leaves and briars.

"Stop! I heard somethin!" Neal shot forward and clutched Pete's arm, pulling the flashlight down.

"You didn't neither. Just the dogs!" Pete said, a little louder. Both boys stood still, craning their thin necks and peering wide-eyed around them at imaginary shapes and shadows in the blackness.

"—Yes I did too," Neal insisted, "over that way!"

"I don't hear nothing." Pete flashed his light ahead again, and started to go on.

"Shut up! There it is again! I heard it! Some animal movin aroun in the brush!"

"God yes! I hear it too now. What do ya think it is?"

"Dunno! Sounds big. Think it's a bear?"

"There aren't no bears aroun here. My Dad said so."

"Wanna go see? Ya dare?"

"Sure I dare. Call the dogs."

"Sergeant! Blaggy! Let's go!" Neal leaped from the path rut, off into the tangled, crashing underbrush. Pete loped after him as best he could with their bag of provisions under his arm, his flashlight's beam swinging wildly, alternately stabbing at treetops and the closing brambles behind him. The briars clung to their legs and arms tenaciously as they ran, and sharp branches

jabbed at their faces and guarding, opened hands.

"*This* way! He went *this* way! I heard him!"

"Look out!" Pete screeched. Neal crashed through a wall of young pine, tripped, and fell sprawling across a moss-buried log. Pete and the two dogs struck him from behind, and all four lay rolling in the tall, sweet fern.

"Gawd. Now we've lost it sure." Neal struggled to his feet painfully, brushing punk from his overalls. "Where in hell's the road now?"

"Must be over there somewhere." From where he lay, Pete waved the flashlight backward, kicking the dogs away.

"Wait!"

In the swinging yellow spear of light, ferns swayed and quivered. A slow shape waddled out into shorter grass, low and heavy-swaying, obliviously reflecting bright gray and black and white.

"There it *is*!"

"Sic im, Sergeant!"

"Get im!"

Pete and Neal scurried after the yapping, hysterical dogs, brandishing the camp-axe, waving the flashlight's beam like a battle banner. With surprising speed, the animal shuffled off through the brush, leaving the dogs far behind at first.

"Head im off! He's goin *that* way!"

Then they heard heavy brush crack and rustle, and soon afterwards the scraping rip of shagoak bark. The dogs began to yap louder, steadily and confidently.

"Treed im!"

"Come here. Kin you see im up there?"

Pete dragged himself over to the sound of the dogs. He swung the light up, waved it around, at the sudden sky and frightened, shaking branches.

"Ya. There he is, in that big crotch way up. See im?—Just what I thought. He's a big porky."

"Gawd, he's a big one, fer a porkypine!"

"O yeah?" Pete wiped his forehead, and saw without thinking that blood came away on the back of his hand. "How do *you* know? Ya never seen one before."

"Yes I have. In zoos. You never did neither. Not a wild one."

"Yes I have too. My Dad an I've seen em, when we're out fishin."

The dogs threw themselves foolishly at the tree trunk, howling. Instincts that all their citified lives had been vented on stray alleycats and passing cars, now ran wild. They exulted in a frenzy of imagined victory, while in an open crotch twenty-five feet above them, the massive porcupine nonchalantly inspected one lifted paw, tossing its gleaming quills indifferently in the cone of yellow light.

"What're we gonna do?"

"We gonna catch im?"

"I hear they're good eatin . . ."

"Who the hell toldja that?"

"I don't remember. Why? What's the matter? Dontcha wanna catch im?"

"Sure. He can't get away now, can he?"

"There ain't trees close enough for im to jump to. He's stuck there."

"You dare to climb up after im?" Pete demanded.

"Do you?"

"Ya. Sure I do."

"Go ahead. I'll hold the light for ya," Neal grinned quickly, offering his hand for the flashlight. Pete felt his blood pulse in his neck and temples. He had been the first to confess his courage, and therefore had to prove it.

"Find me a good stick to poke im off with," he sighed. "An get yerself a big club, so's you can whack im the minute he drops."

Neal accepted the duties of squire with a light heart, and left Pete at his vigil in darkness, while he went to find their weapons, whistling, mowing ferns with the axe.

Pete groped around, discovered a hillock of drier earth and sat down on it, his back against a stump, his elbows on his knees, his forehead resting on his hands. With Neal and the flashlight both gone, he knew he would be afraid of the dark, perhaps as terrified as sometimes he was in the big empty bedroom where he slept when he stayed at his grandfather's house. He held a deep breath, sucked in his stomach in preparation, while he swung one scraping foot in a slow semicircle on the spongy ground, crushing fern beneath it. In the cold air, the sweet rising scent was sharp and intoxicating.

This was the beginning of the big oak woods, what little of it the pulp-loggers had left standing. The tall oaks were spaced apart and let the sky in, and the invading maple and birch saplings and young pines were not yet tall enough to shut it out again. When the first slow waves of being afraid had receded, Pete lifted his head and saw the cloud-blurred milky way. The moon's outline showed dimly through scudding banks of nimbus.

The dogs were crouching at the foot of the shagoak, whining expectantly, growling ferociously when anything moved in the forest. Neal's dog Sergeant clawed awkwardly at the rough trunk and began to howl.

"Stop that, Sergeant!" Pete called out. "Goddammit! He'll come down when I make im, an then you'll run off like the big scairdy-cat you always are!"

Sweat trickled down from under Pete's floppy, too-big fishing hat, down his forehead, then followed his eyebrow and dripped, smarting, into the corner of his eye. He pulled his red bandanna out of his denim jacket pocket, and wiped his forehead and hairline. The stinging hurt that followed reminded him of the blood he had seen on his hand, and gingerly now his fingers traced the cut where a jutting branch of squaw-wood had struck him. He held his fingertips under his nose, and imagined that he smelled his own blood. Over the saltiness and the acrid smell of nicotine stain, the pretended sweet, essential odor made him momentarily sick. The few vague memories that were his own

told him that blood smelled of hospitals, sleep-bringing medicines, and the mysteries of silent death.

Sergeant continued to howl, high-pitched and foolishly mournful.

"All right," Pete muttered, "I'm just as scairt as you are, you big cheesehound. Go ahead an howl, if it makes you feel any better."

The clouds began to sail apart, and a death-white gibbous moon appeared demurely. In the sickly light it cast, the oaks reared up like mountains, and every slowly swishing branch became an ominous *persona* of the forest. Pete caught his breath again, made his stomach stay tight, sat waiting. He could see the big shagoak clearly now, glowering down on him from where it crouched on the sky. The massive lowest branches struck out straight from the trunk, drooping at their ends. The topmost branches, snarled and blighted, formed a twisted globe. The tree looked to Pete like some enormous bird of prey perched, drowsing, on the sky. Pete could not see or hear the porcupine, and he prayed fervently, that somehow, by some miraculous intervention, it had escaped.

'Please, God, make it so. . . . Please, dear God, make it so.' He wanted to say it aloud, but he did not know for sure if Neal were out of hearing. Besides, praying had always made him feel uncomfortable and a little sheepish, as if he were cheating on everyone else in the world.

The dogs jumped up, growling fiercely, facing a black clump of pine. Pete heard boots swishing through the dry, soft floor of needles, and then Neal's cracked whistle, struggling feebly with "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The axe rang out, passing blows at hanging squaw-wood, in time to the tune. Then Pete saw the pencil of light dancing, half-illuminating Neal's round grinning face, his squinting eyes and gleaming buckteeth.

"Well, Davy Crockett, are ya ready? The b'ar is still at bay?"

Pete nodded, and attempted nonchalance. Neal offered him a springing green maple rod, about four feet long, sharply forked

at the thinner end. He had whittled the tips of the forks to keen white points. By his side he swung a piece of four-inch pine log, with sharp, hard squaw-wood stumps protruding.

"Whadaya think of that, huh?"

"Great club," Pete grunted. He waited impatiently on his little hillock for his courage to be demanded. He felt unable to rise by his own volition, let alone perform the feat to which he was committed. But he knew that Neal's taunts could force him to both.

Neal sang, in his changing voice: "'Kilt him a b'ar, when he was only three . . .'—Now you'll be able to say, 'Kilt him a porkypine, when he was just fourteen!'—Wontcha?"

"Yeah." Pete caught the maple stick, and vaulted heavily to his feet. He felt little anger at Neal's smug position, only a dull, aching hollowness in his mouth and throat that he knew was fear. Blood pounded in his temples, at some mistake, that somehow he felt was his own. He refused to recognize the tickling weakness in his arms and legs.

They circled the tree trunk. Neal poked the light up. The big crotch was empty.

"Hey! He's gone!"

"Is he?" Pete gawked in tingling wonder at his miracle. The big crotch was empty! All the way up the trunk, to the naked, twisted top, there was no trace of the porcupine.

"How in hell'd he get away? I been right here all the time, an so have the dogs! Well! Whadaya think of *that*, now!" Pete clucked with shivering satisfaction. The veins in his temples ceased their throbbing, seemed to fall slack. His stomach felt fine. He could swallow again.

"Must be up there somewhere, by Gawd," Neal muttered determinedly. He circled the trunk again, stood back, and darted the light rapidly and methodically along every branch. "Aahhh! *There* he is! Way out on that branch. On that big fork. See?"

"O. Yeah." Pete saw the tiny black face, the broad back gleaming white and gray with its rows of lifted, undulating

needles. There was the porcupine. Pete felt his spine brace and settle, his feet, legs and hips plant themselves, preparing for the first hard crash of shock, and the waves of nausea to follow. But nothing came. Not even fear. Certainly not courage, no gloating of power within. Nothing at all came, not even hollowness. He was the same as before—thinking, afraid, committed, and neither more nor less than before. Disappointed, his whole body relaxed. The porcupine was there. He had known all along that it would be.

"—Sneaky bugger ain't he?" Neal mumbled delightedly. "Lookit im freeze, still hopin we don't see im." Neal let his swinging club go, and caught hold of it in a different place for a better grip. He swung at a fern, still holding the light on its object. "Unh! Like this! I'll club im!" He turned quickly and glanced at Pete. "Well? Goin up after im?"

"Yeah."

Beneath the shagoak tree the grass was short and brown, the earth dried in ridges along the lines of roots. Neal moved under there now, feeling his way while he kept the immobile porcupine within the beam. Pete followed, both hands on his lifted stick. The dogs renewed their furious howling as the boys approached, and Neal kicked them into whimpering silence.

"Look what ya got to climb. Ain't nothin to grab for ten feet, an too big aroun to shinny up. What ya gonna do?"

"Guess I'll have to go find somethin I can prop against it." The softness of Pete's voice, his cool ready answer, surprised his hands that gripped the stick so tightly, and his feet, planted so cautiously far apart. "Gimme the flashlight. I'll go find a log or somethin."

"Huh? What? Give you the flashlight?"

"Can't find anything without it." Pete let himself say this without malice; it made him feel a quick twitch of charity, at the corners of his mouth, to pass up this opportunity for getting back at Neal's cockiness.

"But I gotta watch the porky—."

"You'll be able to see im against the sky. I'll be right back."

"Okay." Neal reluctantly let go of his possession, along with a good share of his pleasant advantage. "I seen somethin right back there might do. Dead pine bout so long, with the branches still on."

"All right."

Walking lightly through the ferns, Pete watched the ground before his feet in the bobbing splash of light, twigs, dead leaves, and brown, mossy stones on the dark red earth, a few crickets, a millipede, a little sleeping toad. He stopped once and switched off the light, to look up at the sky. Many stars had come out, and most of the clouds had blown off to the west. He couldn't remember if that foretold rain or not. Anyway, the sky was very good to look at, and deep. In the pine grove the sky was gone. Pete found the dead pine that Neal had indicated; it looked rotten. He left it there and went on a little farther, until he saw a standing dead maple sapling, barkless and silver-gray, but hard and dry. It was about nine feet long, heavy enough for his weight, and had stumps of branches he could use as hand and footholds. When he had pushed it over and kicked the roots free, he found that he was just able to drag it, if he used both hands and held the flashlight in his mouth. Neal's shouts led him back to the tree.

"Took ya long enough!"

"I'm back ain't I?"

"Yeah, an let's get goin! Look! He's back in is ol crotch."

Pete took off his hat and fanned his sweating face with it. The scratch on his forehead was stinging again. "Here. Help me lean this basterd, willya?" Sweat that had cooled ran down his collarbone, and tickled along his thin ribs under his loose clothing. He did not look at the porcupine or up at where he would climb. He realized that leaving the place and returning had subtly changed something. There was something he would have to do again.

But Neal would not give him the time that he needed. "Come

on! Ooop we go!" He lifted the dead maple by himself and swung it heavily against the shagoak trunk, then shook it vigorously, to lock it in position. "There ya are! Okay! I'll hold it for ya."

"Wait a minute."

"What for? Ya wanna be sure he's sound asleep first?"

Pete could see, in the rings of weakening light, that Neal's little eyes had narrowed more, and his mouth and cheeks had set into something that was almost hate. Pete learned that Neal's commitment to what had to be done now was just as irrevocable as his own.

"Let's have a cigarette first," Pete demanded quickly.

"What? Christ, you'd think this was a mountain lion or somethin, stead of a little goddamn porkypine!"

This was the time. Neal's face fell suddenly, as he mutely awaited the blow that he had so carelessly exposed himself to; all Pete had now to do was to say, 'You callin *me* chicken? Why don't you go on up there, if ya think yer so brave?' Just this, and the cup would have passed, and he would have been free. It would have cost him some pride and prestige, but no killing amount. But the easy words caught in his throat; the second while Neal passed under the hanging sword went by not used. It was not pride. Pete saw this much. It was not his pride in his own word, or disdain of the easy way out—heroic courage. It was not even fear of reprisal, from Neal or God-Himself. And he had not missed the moment; he had held it, in all its awfulness, in completely conscious hands. For a minute, he deluded himself, that this was Charity, or Fate. The moment was gone, and Neal breathed again. And Pete knew that he had allowed it to go by, for a reason he could not tell. He decided to content his bewilderment with hopes for the miserable little cigarette. "—An I'd almost think you was goin to *starve* to death, if we didn't get that porky. Come on, split a smoke with me."

But Neal's narrow escape had made him invincible in his sudden desperateness. "Pullin *teeth* to get *you* to do anythin.

Ya'd think this was a rocket to the moon. We can have a cigarette *right after*."

Pete stood straighter, slapping his pockets unconsciously for things that might fall out. He shut his eyes, and listened to his own breathing. This was not fear; it was the second before you dived from the rock, or before the right pitch came, or before you set the hook when you knew you had a big one on. The air was fresh on his face, and the forest smells sweet and distinct. He could not think. He breathed deeply, and then his body relaxed into action.

Pete grasped branches of the dead maple with both hands. The gray smooth coldness struck his nerves like an electric shock.

"—I'll hand up yer stick when ya reach that first crotch, an then I'll lead ya up with the light.—Want a boost?"

Pete shook his head. He found holds on the leaning maple for both feet. Already he felt as if he were miles up, far away from everything. "—I—can—make—it—." He had scrambled up the steep incline of the maple now. His hands groped, clutched at the oak's rough bark, that tore away in long strips. He pressed his knees hard against the trunk to balance, and waved his arms blindly above his head. His fingers locked together over the big horizontal branch. His feet came up, fast, slipping fast, against the trunk, tearing bark. He swung, pulled, kicked, and then he lay still, hugging it with locked arms and legs, on top of the first branch of the oak.

He opened his eyes. The stabbing, curious light blinded them. "Hold that thing away, will ya?" he shouted. Neal was whooping, jumping up and down. The dogs roared deliriously.

"Jeez, ya did that slick! Couldn't a done better, myself!—He's still up there, in that same big crotch! Here's yer stick, catch! Okay, Go er, boy!"

"Just keep that goddamn light out a my eyes," Pete muttered. He pushed himself carefully backward, until he could steady his back against the trunk. Then he sat up, and saw the next

branch just above his head. With one arm hooked around it, he stood up, swaying, his breath in and his eyes looking nowhere, his other hand holding the dangling stick. He threw a leg over the branch and went up, to face the trunk, hugging it for safety. From there on he could climb the tree standing, circling the trunk, jumping quickly from one branch to the nearest above. Neal and the dogs followed him around, and the circle of light went up with him.

"Ten more feet! Less'n that. Careful, that branch looks slippery! Watch the one over yer head!"

"—Keep that goddamn light out a my eyes—."

"Look out! He's movin aroun up there!"

"—Where's he goin?"

"No place. Standin up, shakin his needles. He sees ya comin. Oop! there he goes! Edgin out on the branch!"

"Which one?"

"I'll tell ya, when ya get there."

Pete climbed automatically now, quickly and almost easily, his breath jabbing in his lungs without hurting. The height was dizzying, inebriating, even though he had not yet dared to look down.

"There! The next branch!"

Pete stopped where he was. He hugged the narrowing trunk, his forked stick hooked between his fingers. "How far out is he?"

"Bout ten or twelve foot. Facin you. Got all is quills up, snarlin sort a! Take er easy now!"

"—Ten or twelve?"

"Maybe more."

Pete lifted himself to the branch, and then stood still, against the trunk. He had not yet looked either at the ground below or at the porcupine. Now his eyes focused and he looked up; along the trunk there was a space all the way to the top where no leaves were. He could see the moon, directly above him, pale and big and white and staring down at him. Turning his feet to lock one heel on either side of the branch, he caught his stomach

in and clenched his teeth to stop his breath. Then he let his head drop forward, rest against the trunk, and looked down. His breath escaped in a grunt that left him weak and empty. The ground was so very far down that his eyes filled with tears. Through faint moonlight, the tears telescoped Neal's face and the leaping dogs, and made them smaller and even farther down. His eyes went shut, hard.

"Good job! Yer there! Careful, now . . ."

Now he would have to turn, hold his back to the trunk, drop one leg on either side of the branch, drop and hug the branch the way he now hugged the trunk. Before his fear could protest, it was done. He began immediately to edge out from the trunk, automatically, without opening his eyes, kicking away with his feet against the trunk, feeling his heart pound hard against the shaking branch.

"Don't drop that stick now!"

"—O God don't let me drop this stick! May I fall and break my neck but don't let me drop this stick!—"

He knew that now he would have to open his eyes and look at the porcupine. Every instinct and nerve screamed, pleaded, that his eyes be opened.

There!

Level with his eyes, along the branch where his chin rested, two yards away, the porcupine waited on a horizontal fork, its flat wide body held low and braced by long black claws digging into the bark. The beam of the flashlight shot up around it. The quills tossed, gleaming. The black nose was lifted and wrinkled back in a snarl, exposing long, yellowed teeth. But it was the scent; when Pete opened his eyes he smelled all the heavy waiting hate, the stink of an animal in deadly fear. The smell of the porcupine overpowered him, made him see whorling spots of black, and the flashing, pounding red of the blood in his temples.

"Don't let him throw is needles at ya! Easy now! Get im!"

'. . . They can't throw em. They got to touch ya,' Pete's mind answered, flowing on by itself at a dizzying rate of speed. 'Lift

the stick. Grip the branch with your elbows. Let out your breath. Take it in again before your guts won't let you. Lift the stick. Lock your legs around the branch, dig your heels in the bark to steady yourself. Lift your stick! God damn it! Lift that stick!' Pete knew that he would not be able to lift the maple rod. The porcupine's eyes would not let him. More than the little eyes, the scent of fear and the stink of death would not let go of him.

And then the porcupine began to move. It was a move that began very deep within it, or behind it, many ages behind it. It gave an inch on the branch, shuffled slowly back one inch, grudgingly and impatiently, foolishly.

Now Pete lifted the stick. He brought it up parallel to the branch, and sighted along it as if it were a rifle. But he saw nothing but his own pounding blood, flashing red. Even more slowly and ponderously, the porcupine went back one inch more. Pete's arm shot forward, and locked straight. The sharp forks struck the porcupine in the chest, just below the lowered head. The animal's solid, braced resistance, quivering back through the green stick, was terrifying in its coldness. A peevish, aged paw shoved the stick away.

The porcupine went still farther back; the branch was smaller where he was now, weak and drooping, swinging with the weight it bore. As if a chain had dragged him, Pete went forward. He thrust once more, leaning long with the dipping, swaying branch. The porcupine half-toppled, spitting and grunting, forepaws grasping the slender branch. The hindfeet clawed air. A last gust of the dreadful scent filled Pete's eyes and mouth. Pete's thighs, pelvis, chest, cheek were pressed, stinging, along the rough branch.

'Don't come now, God *damn* it!' his thudding temples screamed. All his held-back fear boiled and swelled throughout the length of his body, while jagged pieces of the moon, the tree, the long glimpse down, the porcupine on the swaying branch, fought in his eyes. 'Don't look! You can't look!' But his eyes opened and cleared, with all the fear racing through them. He

saw, not the ground below or laughing moonlight, the dizzy branch or the stinking beast before him, but the pattern: always the killer, always the killed. In the pattern he could move.

With all his breath, he shot forward. There was the rocklike resistance, and then his arm extended, freed its full length past, stabbing air. The branch drifted upward. Pete heard the heavy thud, the breath-killing grunt, as the porcupine struck the ground twenty-five feet below.

Then the stick had dropped and Pete was back at the trunk, tear-filled eyes squeezed shut again. The rough bark tore at his hands and face, and pulled his jacket and shirt up to his armpits, as he slipped down the trunk. His hat flew off, sailed away. Then there were no more branches. His hands caught the one he stood on, as he swung down, jerked and dropped. The hard ground stung his feet and knees, and burning hands.

"Pete! Pete! Over here!—Sergeant! Blaggy! Get back—Pete! *Here*! An bring the axe!"

Without looking for it, Pete's hand caught up the axe, and he ran to the splashing light, where the dogs jumped, circling, yapping. Neal crouched a little way behind them, his club half-lifted, the flashlight poked forward. On the ground before him, the bulking lump of the porcupine was very still and low, crushing fern. Neal's thin back shivered, and his face had twisted into a tiny, sobbing knot of fear.

"Didja hitim?" Pete asked when he caught his breath.

"Once. I—I can't get near enough."

Sergeant made a frenzied leap into the circle of light, and caught an easy flick of the waiting tail on his nose. He retreated, whining, his own curling tail between his legs. A dozen bright long quills gleamed on his muzzle, and trickles of blood. Pete's dog Blaggy kept her distance, limping in a wide circle around her fallen foe.

"Go club im, Neal. Hit im hard."

"You got the axe. You kill im." Pete saw Neal's battle, between fear and pride. Neal's twitching shoulders and opened

mouth were pitiful. "I don't wanna. You can kill im," Neal said.

But this was too much. Pete knew that he had accepted much more than his rightful share in the ordeal, and completed it. No matter the glories, the absolute superiority that could be his, he would not do it all. "Go do it yerownself. Ya said ya would."

"I—I—caan't." Neal's eyes blazed irrevocable hate. "NOW GO KILL IM—WILL YA?"

Pete lifted the axe. A stinging sense of shame burned in his throat, for having forced this shamefulness. Something like weariness silenced him, and made him move. The weight of the thing, half-completed, jabbed in his belly like hunger pains. He dragged himself forward, toward the unmoving shape, the smell of waiting, crouching fear of death. His eyes were opened and sharply focused. They saw the flattened watching head, the still body waiting.

He swung. He received the shocking smash, as he dealt it.

The following shorter quick grinding blows came easier. At the last one the quivering freedom, and then the stiffness, came back along the axehelve.

Now Neal stood beside him, holding the light down on the chunk of empty deadness, the dark smearing blood on the ferns, the bent and broken needles, the tight-squeezed eyes, the stiff freedom of death.

"If ya'll let me take the flashlight, I'll run down to the tent an get a burlap sack. To carry im in," Neal said quietly.

"Yeah. Sure."

"—Where didja put the bag a groceries you was carryin?"

"I left em over there where we fell down."

"Want a cigarette before I go?"

"Leave me one, will ya."

"I'll bring the pliers to get them quills out a the dogs. I'll be right back."

Pete stood alone over the porcupine. The air he breathed was heavy with the green smell of crushed fern. With the toe of his

boot he tapped at the stiffness. It was the first time he had seen death, seen it happen. But what had happened? Nothing. Nothing had flown up, the way he thought it must. Flown up, into night, and left its empty shell. If it had, he had not seen it. Had it?

But he knew now why he had let Neal go free, and done it all for himself. And it was not Charity, or Fate.

Pete wished the moon would come out from behind those wheeling clouds again. He had never felt so alone before. Not afraid. Alone.

ROBERT CREELEY: She Went to Stay

Trying to chop mother down is like
hunting deer inside Russia
with phalangists for hat-pins.
I couldn't.

DAISETZ T. SUZUKI: Aspects of Japanese Culture

1

When we look at the development of Japanese culture we find that Zen Buddhism has made many important contributions. The other schools of Buddhism have limited their sphere of influence almost entirely to the spiritual life of the Japanese people; but Zen has gone beyond it. Zen has entered internally into every phase of the cultural life of the people.

In China this was not necessarily the case. Zen united itself to a great extent with Taoist beliefs and practices and with the Confucian teaching of morality, but it did not affect the cultural life of the people so much as it did in Japan. (Is it due to the racial psychology of the Japanese people that they have taken up Zen so intensely and deeply that it has entered intimately into their life?) In China, however, I ought not omit to mention the noteworthy fact that Zen gave great impetus to the development of Chinese philosophy in the Sung dynasty and also to the growth of a certain school of painting. A large number of examples of this school were brought over to Japan beginning with the Kamakura era in the thirteenth century, when Zen monks were constantly traveling between the two neighboring countries. The paintings of Southern Sung thus came to find their ardent admirers on our side of the sea and are now national treasures of Japan, while in China no specimens of this class of painting are to be found.

Before proceeding further, we may make a few general remarks about one of the peculiar features of Japanese art, which is closely related to and finally deducible from the world conception of Zen.

Among things which strongly characterize Japanese artistic talents we may mention the so-called "one-corner" style, which originated with Bayen (Ma Yüan, *fl.* 1175–1225), one of the greatest Southern Sung artists. The "one-corner" style is psycho-

logically associated with the Japanese painters' "thirfty brush" tradition of retaining the least possible number of lines or strokes which go to represent forms on silk or paper. Both are very much in accord with the spirit of Zen. A simple fishing boat in the midst of the rippling waters is enough to awaken in the mind of the beholder a sense of the vastness of the sea and at the same time of peace and contentment—the Zen sense of the Alone. Apparently the boat floats helplessly. It is a primitive structure with no mechanical device for stability and for audacious steering over the turbulent waves, with no scientific apparatus for braving all kinds of weather—quite a contrast to the modern ocean liner. But this very helplessness is the virtue of the fishing canoe, in contrast with which we feel the incomprehensibility of the Absolute encompassing the boat and all the world. Again, a solitary bird on a dead branch, in which not a line, not a shade, is wasted, is enough to show us the loneliness of autumn, when days become shorter and nature begins to roll up once more its gorgeous display of luxurious summer vegetation.[1] It makes one feel somewhat pensive, but it gives one opportunity to withdraw the attention towards the inner life, which, given attention enough, spreads out its rich treasures ungrudgingly before the eyes.

Here we have an appreciation of transcendental aloofness in the midst of multiplicities—which is known as *wabi* in the dictionary of Japanese cultural terms. *Wabi* really means "poverty," or, negatively, "not to be in the fashionable society of the time." To be poor, that is, not to be dependent on things worldly—wealth, power, and reputation—and yet to feel inwardly the presence of something of the highest value, above time and social position: this is what essentially constitutes *wabi*. Stated in terms of practical everyday life, *wabi* is to be satisfied with a little hut, a room of two or three *tatami* (mats), like the log cabin of Thoreau, and with a dish of vegetables picked in

[1] For pictures of a similar nature, see my *Zen Essays*, II and III.

the neighboring fields, and perhaps to be listening to the pattering of a gentle spring rainfall. The cult of *wabi* has entered deeply into the cultural life of the Japanese people. It is in truth the worshiping of poverty—probably a most appropriate cult in a poor country like ours. Despite the modern Western luxuries and comforts of life which have invaded us, there is still an ineradicable longing in us for the cult of *wabi*. Even in the intellectual life, not richness of ideas, not brilliancy or solemnity in marshaling thoughts and building up a philosophical system, is sought; but just to stay quietly content with the mystical contemplation of Nature and to feel at home with the world is more inspiring to us, at least to some of us.

However "civilized," however much brought up in an artificially contrived environment, we all seem to have an innate longing for primitive simplicity, close to the natural state of living. Hence the city people's pleasure in summer camping in the woods or traveling in the desert or opening up an unbeaten track. We wish to go back once in a while to the bosom of Nature and feel her pulsation directly. Zen's habit of mind, to break through all forms of human artificiality and take firm hold of what lies behind them, has helped the Japanese not to forget the soil but to be always friendly with Nature and appreciate her unaffected simplicity. Zen has no taste for complexities that lie on the surface of life. Life itself is simple enough, but when it is surveyed by the analyzing intellect it presents unparalleled intricacies. With all the apparatus of science we have not yet fathomed the mysteries of life. But, once in its current, we seem to be able to understand it, with its apparently endless pluralities and entanglements. Very likely, the most characteristic thing in the temperament of the Eastern people is the ability to grasp life from within and not from without. And Zen has just struck it.

In painting especially, disregard of form results when too much attention or emphasis is given to the all-importance of the spirit. The "one-cornered" style and the economy of brush strokes also help to effect aloofness from conventional rules.

Where you would ordinarily expect a line or a mass or a balancing element, you miss it, and yet this very thing awakens in you an unexpected feeling of pleasure. In spite of shortcomings or deficiencies that no doubt are apparent, you do not feel them so; indeed, this imperfection itself becomes a form of perfection. Evidently, beauty does not necessarily spell perfection of form. This has been one of the favorite tricks of Japanese artists—to embody beauty in a form of imperfection or even of ugliness.

When this beauty of imperfection is accompanied by antiquity or primitive uncouthness, we have a glimpse of *sabi*, so prized by Japanese connoisseurs. Antiquity and primitiveness may not be an actuality. If an object of art suggests even superficially the feeling of a historical period, there is *sabi* in it. *Sabi* consists in rustic unpretentiousness or archaic imperfection, apparent simplicity or effortlessness in execution, and richness in historical associations (which, however, may not always be present); and, lastly, it contains inexplicable elements that raise the object in question to the rank of an artistic production. These elements are generally regarded as derived from the appreciation of Zen. The utensils used in the tearoom are mostly of this nature.

The artistic element that goes into the constitution of *sabi*, which literally means "loneliness" or "solitude," is poetically defined by a teamaster thus:

As I come out
To this fishing village,
Late in the autumn day,
No flowers in bloom I see,
Nor any tinted maple leaves.[2]

Aloneness indeed appeals to contemplation and does not lend itself to spectacular demonstration. It may look most miserable, insignificant, and pitiable, especially when it is put up against

[2] Fujiwara Sadaiye (1162–1241).

the Western or modern setting. To be left alone, with no streamers flying, no fireworks crackling, and this amidst a gorgeous display of infinitely varied forms and endlessly changing colors, is indeed no sight at all. Take one of those *sumiye* sketches, perhaps portraying Kanzan and Jittoku (Han-shan and Shi'h-tê),[3] hang it in a European or an American art gallery, and see what effect it will produce in the minds of the visitors. The idea of aloneness belongs to the East and is at home in the environment of its birth.

It is not only to the fishing village on the autumnal eve that aloneness gives form but also to a patch of green in the early spring—which is in all likelihood even more expressive of the idea of *sabi* or *wabi*. For in the green patch, as we read in the following thirty-one-syllable verse, there is an indication of life impulse amidst the wintry desolation:

> *To those who only pray for the cherries to bloom,*
> *How I wish to show the spring*
> *That gleams from a patch of green*
> *In the midst of the snow-covered mountain-village!*[4]

This is given by one of the old teamasters as thoroughly expressive of *sabi*, which is one of the four principles governing the cult of tea, *cha-no-yu*. Here is just a feeble inception of life power as asserted in the form of a little green patch, but in it he who has an eye can readily discern the spring shooting out from underneath the forbidding snow. It may be said to be a mere suggestion that stirs his mind, but just the same it is life itself and not its feeble indication. To the artist, life is as much here as when the whole field is overlaid with verdure and flowers. One may call this the mystic sense of the artist.

[3] Zen poet-recluses of the T'ang dynasty who have been a favorite subject for Far Eastern painters. [Gary Snyder's translations of some of the Han-shan poems are printed in this issue.]

[4] Fujiwara Iyetaka (1158–1237).

Asymmetry is another feature that distinguishes Japanese art. The idea is doubtlessly derived from the "one-corner" style of Bayen. The plainest and boldest example is the plan of Buddhist architecture. The principal structures, such as the Tower Gate, the Dharma Hall, the Buddha Hall, and others, may be laid along one straight line; but structures of secondary or supplementary importance, sometimes even those of major importance, are not arranged symmetrically as wings along either side of the main line. They may be found irregularly scattered over the grounds in accordance with the topographical peculiarities. You will readily be convinced of this fact if you visit some of the Buddhist temples in the mountains, for example, the Iyeyasu shrine at Nikko. We can say that asymmetry is quite characteristic of Japanese architecture of this class.

This can be demonstrated *par excellence* in the construction of the tearoom and in the tools used in connection with it. Look at the ceiling, which may be constructed in at least three different styles, and at some of the utensils for serving tea, and again at the grouping and laying of the steppingstones or flagstones in the garden. We find so many illustrations of asymmetry, or, in a way, of imperfection, or of the "one-corner" style.

Some Japanese moralists try to explain this liking of the Japanese artists for things asymmetrically formed and counter to the conventional, or rather geometrical, rules of art by the theory that the people have been morally trained not to be obtrusive but always to efface themselves, and that this mental habit of self-annihilation manifests itself accordingly in art—for example, when the artist leaves the important central space unoccupied. But, to my mind, this theory is not quite correct. Would it not be a more plausible explanation to say that the artistic genius of the Japanese people has been inspired by the Zen way of looking at individual things as perfect in themselves and at the same time as embodying the nature of totality which belongs to the One?

The doctrine of ascetic aestheticism is not so fundamental as

that of Zen aestheticism. Art impulses are more primitive or more innate than those of morality. The appeal of art goes more directly into human nature. Morality is regulative, art is creative. One is an imposition from without, the other is an irrepressible expression from within. Zen finds its inevitable association with art but not with morality. Zen may remain unmoral but not without art. When the Japanese artists create objects imperfect from the point of view of form, they may even be willing to ascribe their art motive to the current notion of moral asceticism; but we need not give too much significance to their own interpretation or to that of the critic. Our consciousness is not, after all, a very reliable standard of judgment.

However this may be, asymmetry is certainly characteristic of Japanese art, which is one of the reasons informality or approachability also marks to a certain degree Japanese objects of art. Symmetry inspires a notion of grace, solemnity, and impressiveness, which is again the case with logical formalism or the piling up of abstract ideas. The Japanese are often thought not to be intellectual and philosophical, because their general culture is not thoroughly impregnated with intellectuality. This criticism, I think, results somewhat from the Japanese love of asymmetry. The intellectual primarily aspires to balance, while the Japanese are apt to ignore it and incline strongly towards imbalance.

Imbalance, asymmetry, the "one-corner," poverty, simplification, *sabi* or *wabi,* aloneness, and cognate ideas make up the most conspicuous and characteristic features of Japanese art and culture. All these emanate from one central perception of the truth of Zen, which is "the One in the Many and the Many in the One," or better, "the One remaining as one in the Many individually and collectively."

2

That Zen has helped to stimulate the artistic impulses of the Japanese people and to color their works with ideas charac-

teristic of Zen is due to the following facts: the Zen monasteries were almost exclusively the repositories of learning and art, at least during the Kamakura and the Muromachi eras; the Zen monks had constant opportunities to come in contact with foreign cultures; the monks themselves were artists, scholars, and mystics; they were even encouraged by the political powers of the time to engage in commercial enterprises to bring foreign objects of art and industry to Japan; the aristocrats and the politically influential classes of Japan were patrons of Zen institutions and were willing to submit themselves to the discipline of Zen. Zen thus worked not only directly on the religious life of the Japanese but also most strongly on their general culture.

The Tendai, the Shingon, and the Jōdō[5] contributed greatly to imbue the Japanese with the spirit of Buddhism, and through their iconography to develop their artistic instincts for sculpture, color painting, architecture, textile fabrics, and metalwork. But the philosophy of Tendai is too abstract and abstruse to be understood by the masses; the ritualism of Shingon is too elaborate and complicated and consequently too expensive for popularity. On the other hand, Shingon and Tendai and Jōdō produced fine sculpture and pictures and artistic utensils to be used in their daily worship. The most highly prized "national treasures" belong to the Tempyō, the Nara, and the Heian periods, when those two schools of Buddhism were in the ascendency and intimately involved with the cultured classes of the people. The Jōdō teaches the Pure Land in all its magnificence, where the Buddha of Infinite Light is attended by his retinue of Bodhisattvas, and this inspired the artists to paint those splendid pictures of Amida preserved in the various Buddhist temples of Japan. The Nichiren and the Shin are the creation of the Japanese religious mind. The Nichiren gave no specifically artistic and cultural impetus to us; the Shin tended to be somewhat

[5] These, with the Shin and the Nichiren, are the principal schools of Buddhism in Japan.

iconoclastic and produced nothing worth mentioning in the arts and literature except the hymns known as *wasan* and the "honorable letters" (*gobunsho* or *ofumi*) chiefly written by Rennyo (1415–99).

Zen came to Japan after Shingon and Tendai and was at once embraced by the military classes. It was more or less by an historical accident that Zen was set against the aristocratic priesthood. The nobility, too, in the beginning felt a certain dislike for it and made use of their political advantage to stir up opposition to Zen. In the beginning of the Japanese history of Zen, therefore, Zen avoided Kyoto and established itself under the patronage of the Hōjō family in Kamakura. This place, as the seat of the feudal government in those days, became the headquarters of Zen discipline. Many Zen monks from China settled in Kamakura and found strong support in the Hōjō family—Tokiyori, Tokimune, and their successors and retainers.

The Chinese masters brought many artists and objects of art along with them, and the Japanese who came back from China were also bearers of art and literature. Pictures of Kakei (Hsia Kuei, *fl.* 1190–1220), Mokkei (Mu-ch'i, *fl. c.* 1240), Ryōkai (Liang K'ai, *fl. c.* 1210), Bayen (Ma Yüan, *fl.* 1175–1225), and others thus found their way to Japan. Manuscripts of the noted Zen masters of China were also given shelter in the monasteries here. Calligraphy in the Far East is an art just as much as *sumiye* painting, and it was cultivated almost universally among the intellectual classes in olden times. The spirit pervading Zen pictures and calligraphy made a strong impression on them, and Zen was readily taken up and followed. In it there is something virile and unbending. A mild, gentle, and graceful air—almost feminine, one might call it—which prevailed in the periods preceding the Kamakura, is now superseded by an air of masculinity, expressing itself mostly in the sculpture and calligraphy of the period. The rugged virility of the warriors of the Kwanto districts is proverbial, in contrast to the grace and

refinement of the courtiers in Kyoto. The soldierly quality, with its mysticism and aloofness from worldly affairs, appeals to the willpower. Zen in this respect walks hand in hand with the spirit of Bushido ("Warriors' Way").

Another factor in the discipline of Zen, or rather in the monastic life in which Zen carries out its scheme of teaching, is this: as the monastery is usually situated in the mountains, its inmates are in the most intimate touch with nature, they are close and sympathetic students of it. They observe plants, birds, animals, rocks, rivers which people of the town would leave unnoticed. And their observation deeply reflects their philosophy, or better, their intuition. It is not that of a mere naturalist. It penetrates into the life itself of the objects that come under the monks' observation. Whatever they may paint of nature will inevitably be expressive of this intuition; the "spirit of the mountains" will be felt softly breathing in their works.

The fundamental intuition the Zen masters gain through their discipline seems to stir up their artistic instincts if they are at all susceptible to art. The intuition that impels the masters to create beautiful things, that is, to express the sense of perfection through things ugly and imperfect, is apparently closely related to the feeling for art. The Zen masters may not make good philosophers, but they are very frequently fine artists. Even their technique is often of the first order, and besides they know how to tell us something unique and original. One such is Musō the National Teacher (1275-1351). He was a fine calligrapher and a great landscape gardener; wherever he resided, at quite a number of places in Japan, he designed splendid gardens, some of which are still in existence and well preserved after so many years of changing times. Among the noted painters of Zen in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we may mention Chō Densu (d. 1431), Kei Shoki (*fl.* 1490), Josetsu (*fl.* 1375–1420), Shūbun (*fl.* 1420–50), Seshū (1421–1506), and others.

Georges Duthuit, the author of *Chinese Mysticism and Modern Painting*, seems to understand the spirit of Zen mysticism.

From him we have this: "When the Chinese artist paints, what matters is the concentration of thought and the prompt and vigorous response of the hand to the directing will. Tradition ordains him to see, or rather to feel, as a whole the work to be executed, before embarking on anything. 'If the ideas of a man are confused, he will become the slave of exterior conditions.' . . . He who deliberates and moves his brush intent on making a picture, misses to a still greater extent the art of painting. [This seems like a kind of automatic writing.] Draw bamboos for ten years, become a bamboo, then forget all about bamboos when you are drawing. In possession of an infallible technique, the individual places himself at the mercy of inspiration."

To become a bamboo and to forget that you are one with it while drawing it—this is the Zen of the bamboo, this is the moving with the "rhythmic movement of the spirit" which resides in the bamboo as well as in the artist himself. What is now required of him is to have a firm hold on the spirit and yet not to be conscious of the fact. This is a very difficult task achieved only after long spiritual training.[6] The Eastern people have been taught since the earliest times to subject themselves to this kind of discipline if they want to achieve something in the world of art and religion. Zen, in fact, has given expression to it in the following phrase: "One in All and All in One." When this is thoroughly understood, there is creative genius.

It is of utmost importance here to interpret the phrase in its proper sense. People imagine that it means pantheism, and some students of Zen seem to agree. This is to be regretted, for pantheism is something foreign to Zen and also to the artist's understanding of his work. When the Zen masters declare the One to be in the All and the All in the One, they do not mean that there is a thing to be known as the One or as the All and that the one is the other and *vice versa*. As the One is in the All, some people suppose that Zen is a pantheistic teaching.

[6] Cf. Takuan on "Prajñā Immovable."

Far from it; Zen would never hypostatize the One or the All as a thing to be grasped by the senses. The phrase "One in All and All in One" is to be understood as an expression of absolute *prajñā*-intuition and is not to be conceptually analyzed. When we see the moon, we know that it is the moon, and that is enough. Those who proceed to analyze the experience and try to establish a theory of knowledge are not students of Zen. They cease to be so, if they ever were, at the very moment of their procedure as analysts. Zen always upholds its experience as such and refuses to commit itself to any system of philosophy.

Even when Zen indulges in intellection, it never subscribes to a pantheistic interpretation of the world. For one thing, there is no One in Zen. If Zen ever speaks of the One as if it recognized it, this is a kind of condescension to common parlance. To Zen students, the One is the All and the All is the One; and yet the One remains the One and the All the All. "Not two!" may lead the logician to think, "It is One." But the master would go on, saying, "Not One either!" "What then?" we may ask. We here face a blind alley, as far as verbalism is concerned. Therefore, it is said that "If you wish to be in direct communion [with Reality], I tell you, 'Not two!' "

The following *mondo*[7] may help to illustrate the point I wish to make in regard to the Zen attitude towards the so-called pantheistic interpretation of nature.

A monk asked Tōsu (T'ou-tzu), a Zen master of the T'ang period: "I understand that all sounds are the voice of the Buddha. Is this right?" The master said, "That is right." The monk then proceeded: "Would not the master please stop making a noise which echoes the sound of a fermenting mass of filth?" The master thereupon struck the monk.

The monk further asked Tōsu: "Am I in the right when I understand the Buddha as asserting that all talk, however trivial or derogatory, belongs to ultimate truth?" The master said,

[7] This and what follows are all from the *Hekigan-shu*, case 79.

"Yes, you are in the right." The monk went on, "May I then call you a donkey?" The master thereupon struck him.

It may be necessary to explain these *mondo* in plain language. To conceive every sound, every noise, every utterance one makes as issuing from the fountainhead of one Reality, that is, from one God, is pantheistic, I imagine. For "he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25); and again, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). If this be the case, a Zen master's hoarse throat echoes the melodious resonance of the voice flowing from the Buddha's golden mouth, and even when a great teacher is decried as reminding one of an ass, the defamation must be regarded as reflecting something of ultimate truth. All forms of evil must be said somehow to be embodying what is true and good and beautiful, and to be a contribution to the perfection of Reality. To state it more concretely, bad is good, ugly is beautiful, false is true, imperfect is perfect, and also conversely. This is, indeed, the kind of reasoning in which those indulge who conceive the God-nature to be immanent in all things. Let us see how the Zen master treats this problem.

It is remarkable that Tōsu put his foot right down against such intellectualist interpretations and struck his monk. The latter in all probability expected to see the master nonplused by his statements which logically follow from his first assertion. The masterful Tōsu knew, as all Zen masters do, the uselessness of making any verbal demonstration against such a "logician." For verbalism leads from one complication to another; there is no end to it. The only effective way, perhaps, to make such a monk as this one realize the falsehood of his conceptual understanding is to strike him and so let him experience within himself the meaning of the statement, "One in All and All in One." The monk was to be awakened from his logical somnambulism. Hence Tōsu's drastic measure.

Secchō[8] here gives his comments in the following lines:

Pity that people without number try to play with the tide;
They are all ultimately swallowed up into it and die!
Let them suddenly awake [from the deadlock],
And see that all the rivers run backward, swelling and surging.

What is needed here is an abrupt turning or awakening, with which one comes to the realization of the truth of Zen—which is neither transcendentalism nor immanentism nor a combination of the two. The truth is as Tōsu declares in the following:

A monk asks, "What is the Buddha?"

Tōsu answers, "The Buddha."

Monk: "What is the Tao?"

Tōsu: "The Tao."

Monk: "What is Zen?"

Tōsu: "Zen."

The master answers like a parrot, he is echo itself. In fact, there is no other way of illumining the monk's mind than affirming that what is is—which is the final fact of experience.

Another example[9] is given to illustrate the point. A monk asked Jōshu (Chao-chou), of the T'ang dynasty: "It is stated that the Perfect Way knows no difficulties, only that it abhors discrimination. What is meant by No-discrimination?"

Jōshu said, "Above the heavens and below the heavens, I alone am the Honored One."

The monk suggested, "Still a discrimination."

The master's retort was, "O this worthless fellow! Where is the discrimination?"

By discrimination the Zen masters mean what we have when we refuse to accept Reality as it is or in its suchness, for we then reflect on it and analyze it into concepts, going on with

[8] Seccho (Hsüeh-tou, 980-1052) was one of the great Zen masters of the Sung, noted for his literary accomplishment. The *Hekigan-shu* is based on Seccho's "One Hundred Cases," which he selected out of the annals of Zen.

[9] *Hekigan-shu,* case 57.

intellection and finally landing on a circulatory reasoning. Jōshu's affirmation is a final one and allows no equivocation, no argumentation. We have simply to take it as it stands and remain satisfied with it. In case we somehow fail to do this, we just leave it alone, and go somewhere else to seek our own enlightenment. The monk could not see where Jōshu was, and he went further on and remarked, "This is still a discrimination!" The discrimination in point of fact is on the monk's side and not on Jōshu's. Hence "the Honored One" now turns into "a worthless fellow."

As I said before, the phrase "All in One and One in All" is not to be analyzed first to the concepts "One" and "All," and the preposition is not then to be put between them; no discrimination is to be exercised here, but one is just to accept it and abide with it, which is really no-abiding at all. There is nothing further to do. Hence the master's striking or calling names. He is not indignant, nor is he short-tempered, but he wishes thereby to help his disciples out of the pit which they have dug themselves. No amount of argument avails here, no verbal persuasion. Only the master knows how to turn them away from a logical impasse and how to open a new way for them; let them, therefore, simply follow him. By following him they all come back to their Original Home.

When an intuitive or experiential understanding of Reality is verbally formulated as "All in One and One in All," we have there the fundamental statement as it is taught by all the various schools of Buddhism. In the terminology of the Prajñā school, this is: *sūnyatā* ("emptiness") is *tathatā* ("suchness"), and *tathatā* is *sūnyatā: sūnyatā* is the world of the Absolute, and *tathatā* is the world of particulars. One of the commonest sayings in Zen is "Willows are green and flowers red" or "Bamboos are straight and pine trees are gnarled." Facts of experience are accepted as they are, Zen is not nihilistic, nor is it merely positivistic. Zen would say that just because the bamboo is straight it is of Emptiness, or that just because of Emptiness the

bamboo cannot be anything else but a bamboo and not a pine tree. What makes the Zen statements different from mere sense experience, however, is that Zen's intuition grows out of *prajñā* and not out of *jñā*.[10] It is from this point of view that when asked "What is Zen?" the master sometimes answers "Zen" and sometimes "Not-Zen."

We can see now that the principle of *sumiye* painting is derived from this Zen experience, and that directness, simplicity, movement, spirituality, completeness, and other qualities we observe in the *sumiye* class of Oriental paintings have organic relationship to Zen. There is no pantheism in *sumiye* as there is none in Zen.

There is another thing I must not forget to mention in this connection, which is perhaps the most important factor in *sumiye* as well as in Zen. It is creativity. When it is said that *sumiye* depicts the spirit of an object, or that it gives a form to what has no form, this means that there must be a spirit of creativity moving over the picture. The painter's business thus is not just to copy or imitate nature, but to give to the object something living in its own right. It is the same with the Zen master. When he says that the willow is green and the flower is red, he is not just giving us a description of how nature looks, but something whereby green is green and red is red. This something is what I call the spirit of creativity. *Sūnyatā* is formless, but it is the fountainhead of all possibilities. To turn what is possible into an actuality is an act of creativity. When Tōsu is asked, "What is Dharma?" he answers, "Dharma"; when asked, "What is Buddha?" he answers "Buddha." This is by no means a parrotlike response, a mere echoing; all the answers come out of his creative mind, without which there is no Zen in

[10] *Prajñā* may be translated "transcendental wisdom," while *jñā* or *vijñāna* is "relative knowledge." For a detailed explanation, see my *Studies in Zen Buddhism*, pp. 85 ff.

Tōsu. The understanding of Zen is to understand what kind of mind this is. Yakusan's meeting with Rikō will illustrate this.[11]

Yakusan (Yao-shan, 751–834) was a great master of the T'ang era. When Rikō (Li Ao), governor of the province, heard of his Zen mastership, he sent for him to come to the capital. Yakusan, however, refused to come. This happened several times. Rikō grew impatient and came in person to see the master in his own mountain retreat. Yakusan was reading the sutras and paid no attention whatever to the arrival of the governor. The attendant monk reminded the master of the fact, but he still kept on reading. Rikō felt hurt and remarked, "Seeing the face is not at all like hearing the name." By this he meant that the person in actuality was not equal to his reputation. Yakusan called out, "O Governor!" Rikō echoed at once, "Yes, Master." The master then said, "Why do you evaluate the hearing over the seeing?" The governor apologized and asked, "What is Tao?" Yakusan pointed up with his hand and then down, and said, "Do you understand?" Rikō said, "No, Master." Thereupon Yakusan remarked, "The clouds are in the sky and water in the jar." It is said that this pleased the governor very much.

Did Rikō really understand what Yakusan meant? Yakusan's is no more than a plain statement of the facts as they are, and we may ask, "Where is Tao?" Rikō was a great scholar and philosopher. He must have had some abstract conception of Tao. Could he so readily reconcile his view with Yakusan's? Whatever we may say about this, Yakusan and Tōsu and other Zen masters are all walking the same track. The artists are also required to strike it.

[11] *Dentō-roku* ("Transmission of the Lamp"), fasc. 14.

BRUCE BOYD: Aubade

While the sea-bird rises / with the moon,
flinging dry sand / into the eye of the mountain,
moonrise, stinging the cricket's eye, moistens the room, unties

the light-stiff latch of the word-strung wicket. Out flies
the moon-bird, flies to the top of the bright wet mountain
to sing. Words, prized by the cricket, drop from the moon-

bird's beak like beads unstrung from a string. Words / pass,
rattle for a while in recollection. Words / leave recollection.
Recollection greets the wordless sunrise, dry;

meets it with a sound of greeting / like a sigh, as
a bone-dry fountain might / gasp a waterless deception
up to where the birds fly by.

Blown back, then (along with the moon,
recollection waits with the cricket
for moonrise, again / & the sea-bird to moisten the room.

FRANK O'HARA: Franz Kline Talking

[FRANK O'HARA: *Franz Kline's is one of the most outstanding achievements in contemporary painting. As a leader of the movement which is frequently called "American type painting" abroad and is described as Abstract Expressionism or Action Painting here, his work embodies those qualities of individuality, daring and grandeur which have made the movement a powerful influence. The painters of this movement, so totally different from each other in aspect, so totally without the look of a school, have given us as Americans an art which for the first time in our history we can love and emulate, aspire to and understand, without provincial digression or prejudice. The Europeanization of our sensibilities has at last been exorcized as if by magic, an event of some violence which Henry James would have hailed as eagerly as Walt Whitman and which allows us as a nation to exist internationally. We have something to offer and to give besides admiration on the one hand and refuge on the other.*

Kline's role in this achievement has been a compelling one. His work does not represent an esthetic "stand" for or against a past or present style, nor has he sought the absolute of a pure esthetic statement. These personages which are at the same time noble structures (Cardinal, Elizabeth, Siegfried), *these structures which are at once tragic personages* (Wanamaker Block, Bridge, C & O), *seem both to express and to live by virtue of the American dream of power, that power which shuns domination and subjection and exists purely to inspire love.*

Kline's studio is high-ceilinged and light and bare, with tall north windows facing on West 14th Street from the second floor. It is a floor through, and the south windows (French) give onto a terrace which is the roof of the store beneath (or is it a bar?). At the edge of this terrace, which has only two sun chairs and is bare like the studio, a little forest of trees-of-heaven partly hides a small tin building, apparently the rear of a 13th Street

restaurant. Inside again, there are three or four painting walls of various sizes and early and recent paintings are stacked casually about. To see some of the paintings shown at the Egan Gallery in the late forties and early fifties is to take part in one of art's great dramas, the reaffirmation of value, a drama which has the added poignance of meeting again someone you once loved and who is more beautiful than ever. Near them are several recent works employing more color; side by side with the earlier works they state the inexorability of change in the environment of truly living forms: "This is our life yesterday, this our life today." Kline is one of those lighthouses toward which Baudelaire directed our gaze: what is thrilling is that they are shining here, in our very time.

He is an ardent conversationalist but in his studio he is quiet. Everything is clear there, as it is at his exhibitions. We went to my place for the talk which follows.]

FRANZ KLINE: That's Bill's isn't it? Terrific! You can always tell a de Kooning, even though this one doesn't look like earlier ones or later ones. It's not that style has a particular look, it just adds up. You become a stylist, I guess, but that's not it.

Somebody will say I have a black-and-white style, or a calligraphic style, but I never started out with that being consciously a style or attitude about painting. Sometimes you do have a definite idea about what you're doing—and at other times it all just seems to disappear. I don't feel mine is the most modern, contemporary, beyond-the-pale, *gone* kind of painting. But then, I don't have that kind of fuck-the-past attitude. I have very strong feelings about individual paintings and painters past and present.

Now, Bonnard at times seems styleless. Someone said of him that he had the rare ability to forget from one day to another what he had done. He added the next day's experience to it, like a child following a balloon. He painted the particular scene itself: in form, the woman can't quite get out of the bathtub.

And he's a real colorist. The particular scene itself? Matisse wouldn't let that happen, he didn't let himself get too entranced with anything.

In Braque and Gris, they seemed to have an idea of the organization beforehand in their mind. With Bonnard, he is organizing in front of you. You can tell in Léger just when he discovered how to make it like an engine, as John Kane said, being a carpenter, a joiner. What's wrong with that? You see it in Barney Newman too, that he knows what a painting should be. He paints as he thinks *painting* should be, which is pretty heroic.

What with the drying and all, you can tell immediately pretty much whether a painting was done all at once or at different intervals. In one Picasso you can see it was all immediate, spontaneous, or in another that he came back the next day and put on the stroke that completed it. Sometimes you get one of those dark Ryders; it's the top one and it's all spontaneous and immediate, done all at once, and there are seven or eight others underneath it you can't tell about.

Now I'm not saying that doing it all at once implies an idea of the organization beforehand or that you like it when it's done all at once or that you like it when you've had the idea before you began. You instinctively like what you can't do. I like Fra Angelico. I used to try all the time to do those blue eyes that are really blue. Someone once told me to look at Ingres. I loved Daumier and Rembrandt at the time and I was bored when I looked at Ingres. Before long I began to like it. You go through the different phases of liking different guys who are not like you. You go to a museum looking for Titian and you wind up looking at someone else. But the way of working before Cézanne is hidden. Cézanne is like an analyst and he seems to be right there, you can see him painting the side of a nose with red. Even though he wanted to paint like Velasquez.

They painted the object that they looked *at*. They didn't fit out a studio and start painting without a subject. I find that I do

both. Hokusai painted Fuji because it was there. He and others remembered it and drew from their imagination of how they had tried to paint it when it was in front of them. When he paints Fuji with a brush—birds, mist, snow, etc.—it's not the photographic eye but his mind has been brought to the utter simplification of it, and that doesn't bring it into symbolism. With Hokusai it was more like Toulouse-Lautrec drawing dancers and wanting to draw like Degas who wanted to draw like Ingres. It has something to do with wanting to see people dance. Or like Rembrandt going to see Hercules Seghers' landscapes.

Malevitch is interesting to me. Maybe because you are able to translate through his motion the endless wonder of what painting could be, without describing an eye or a breast. That would be looking at things romantically, which painters don't do. The thing has its own appeal outside of the white-on-white, this-on-that idea. With Mondrian, in a way you see that the condition is that he's a guy who solves his own problems illogically. He's done it with paint illogically to himself—which makes it logical to some other people. I was at the studio of one of these people one day and he said he was going to put red in one of the squares to improve it and what did I think? I said try it out and see if you like it, not if it improves it.

There's this comedian I know in the borscht circuit. They had a theater group and everything up there and my friend asked me to go there and teach painting. I told him I didn't have the money to get there and he said he'd send it to me. I got up there and talked with this comedian. He had studied with Raphael Soyer and painted, but he never could sell anything, so he took this job as a comedian and never got back to painting. He loved Jackson Pollock and had such marvelous heart about it all that he could never have been popular at either painting *or* comedy. He *cared* so much. Somebody did an imitation of my drawing on a napkin, laughing, six lines, and said, "That's all there is to it." My friend said, "That's why I like it."

Then of course there are reviewers. I read reviews because they are a facet of someone's mind which has been brought to bear on the work. Although if someone's against it, they act as if the guy had spent his life doing something worthless.

Someone can paint *not* from his own time, not even from himself. Then the reviewer cannot like it, maybe. But just to review, like a shopper, I saw one this, one that, good, awful, is terrible. Or he may be hopelessly uninterested in what it is anyway, but writes about it. I read Leonard Lyons in the john the other day and he said every other country picked out the best art for the Venice Biennale, but we didn't. Then someone in the government went to Brussels and said painters should have to get a license for buying brushes. Lyons went on to say he hoped that there will be a day when abstractions are not supposed to be made for a child's playroom.

Criticism must come from those who are around it, who are not shocked that someone should be doing it at all. It should be exciting, and in a way that excitement comes from, in looking at it, that it's *not* that autumn scene you love, it's *not* that portrait of your grandmother.

Which reminds me of Boston, for some reason. You know I studied there for a while and once later I was up there for a show and met this Bostonian who thought I looked pretty Bohemian. His definition of a Bohemian artist was someone who could live where animals would die. He also talked a lot about the 8th Street Club and said that Hans Hofmann and Clem Greenberg run it, which is like Ruskin saying that Rowlandson and Daumier used up enough copper to clad the British Navy and it's too bad they didn't sink it. Why was he so upset about an artists' club in another city? You get classified as a New York painter or poet automatically. They do it in Boston or Philadelphia, you don't do it yourself.

Tomlin. In a way, they never did much about him and I think it's sad. He didn't start an art school, but he had an influence—his statements were very beautiful. When Pollock talked

about painting he didn't usurp anything that wasn't himself He didn't want to change anything, he wasn't using any outworn attitudes about it, he was always himself. He just wanted to be in it because he loved it. The response in the person's mind to that mysterious thing that has happened has nothing to do with who did it first. Tomlin, however, did hear these voices and in reference to his early work and its relation to Braque, I like him for it. He was not an academician of Cubism even then, he was an extremely personal and sensitive artist. If they want to talk about him, they say he was supposed to be Chopin. He didn't knock over any tables. Well, who's supposed to be Beethoven? Braque? I saw Tomlin's later work at the Arts Club in Chicago when he was abstract and it was the most exciting thing around —you look up who else was in the show.

If you're a painter, you're not alone. There's no way to be alone. You think and you care and you're with all the people who care, including the young people who don't know they do yet. Tomlin in his late paintings knew this. Jackson always knew it: that if you meant it enough when you did it, it will mean that much. It's like Caruso and Bjoerling. Bjoerling sounds like Caruso, but if you think of Caruso and McCormack you think of being in the world as you are. Bjoerling sounded like Caruso, but it turned out to be handsome. Bradley Tomlin didn't. Unless . . . Hell, if you look at all the painting in the world today it will probably all turn out to be handsome, I don't know.

The nature of anguish is translated into different forms. What has happened is that we're not through the analytical period of learning what motivates things. If you can figure out the motivation, it's supposed to be all right. But when things are "beside themselves" what matters is the care these things are given by someone. It's assumed that to read something requires an ability beyond that of a handwriting expert, but if someone throws something on a canvas it doesn't require any more care than if someone says, "I don't give a damn."

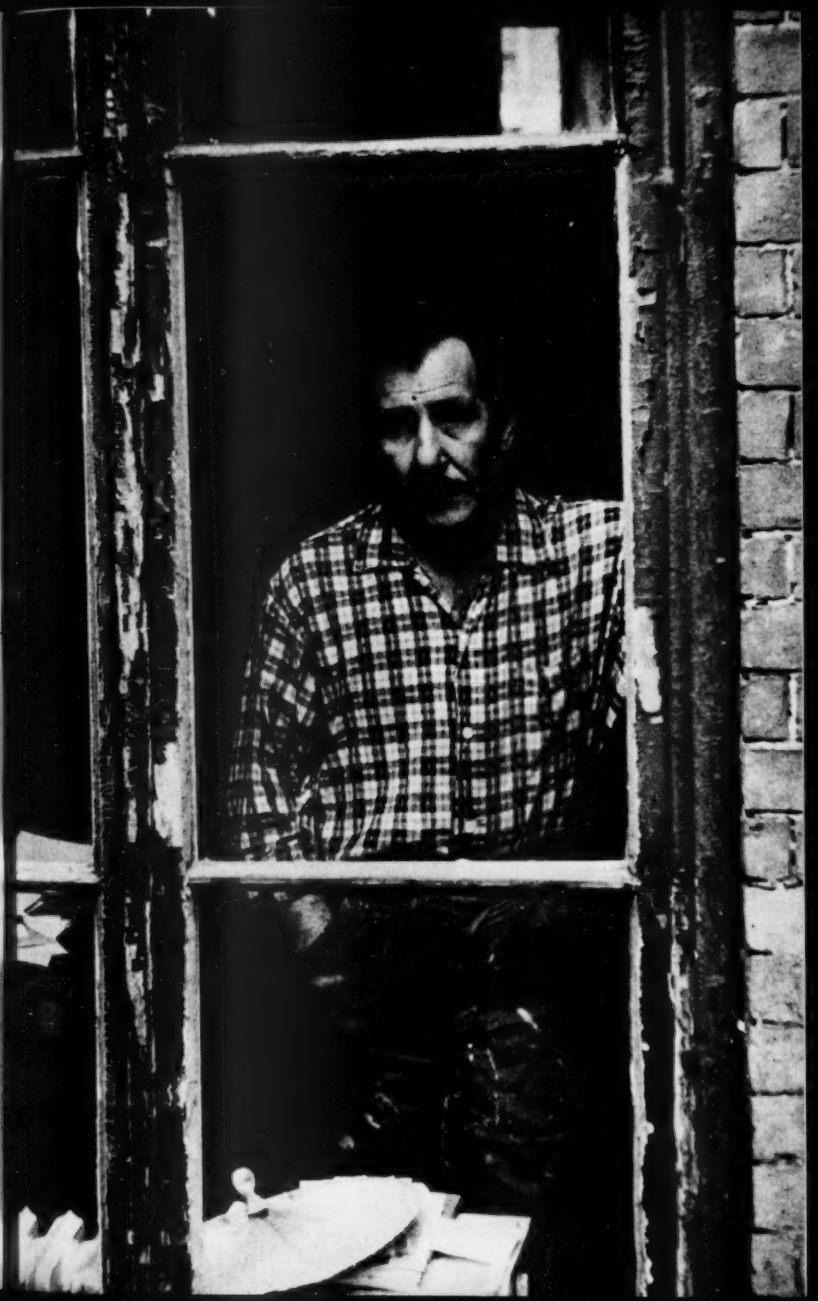
Like with Jackson: you don't paint the way someone, by observing your life, thinks you *have* to paint, you paint the way you have to in order to *give*, that's life itself, and someone will look and say it is the product of knowing, but it has nothing to do with knowing, it has to do with giving. The question about knowing will naturally be wrong. When you've finished giving, the look surprises you as well as anyone else.

Of course, this must be an American point of view. When Delacroix talks about the spirit, it must be French. It couldn't be Russian or Japanese. But writing his journals doesn't make him knowledgeable or practical. Delacroix was more interesting than that. That isn't the end in relation to his paintings. If it had been the end, people would have thought it interesting. Some people do think so.

Some painters talking about painting are like a lot of kids dancing at a prom. An hour later you're too shy to get out on the floor.

Hell, half the world wants to be like Thoreau at Walden worrying about the noise of traffic on the way to Boston; the other half use up their lives being part of that noise. I like the second half. Right?

To be right is the most terrific personal state that nobody is interested in.



August (1958

Corinthian (1958)

Elizabeth (1957

GARY SNYDER: Cold Mountain Poems

[In the Japanese art exhibit that came to America in 1953 was a small sumi sketch of a robe-tattered wind-swept long-haired laughing man holding a scroll, standing on a cliff in the mountains. This was Kanzan, or Han-shan, "Cold Mountain"—his name taken from where he lived. He is a mountain madman in an old Chinese line of ragged hermits. When he talks about Cold Mountain he means himself, his home, his state of mind. He lived in the T'ang dynasty—traditionally A.D. *627-650, although Hu Shih dates him 700-780. This makes him roughly contemporary with Tu Fu, Li Po, Wang Wei, and Po Chü-i. His poems, of which three hundred survive, are written in T'ang colloquial: rough and fresh. The ideas are Taoist, Buddhist, Zen. He and his sidekick Shih-te (Jittoku in Japanese) became great favorites with Zen painters of later days—the scroll, the broom, the wild hair and laughter. They became Immortals and you sometimes run onto them today in the skidrows, orchards, hobo jungles, and logging camps of America.* G.S.]

PREFACE TO THE POEMS OF HAN-SHAN by LU CH'IU-YIN, GOVERNOR OF T'AI PREFECTURE

No one knows just what sort of man Han-shan was. There are old people who knew him: they say he was a poor man, a crazy character. He lived alone seventy li west of the T'ang-hsing district of T'ien-t'ai at a place called Cold Mountain. He often went down to the Kuo-ch'ing Temple. At the temple lived Shih-te, who ran the dining hall. He sometimes saved leftovers for Han-shan, hiding them in a bamboo tube. Han-shan would come and carry it away; walking the long veranda, calling and shouting happily, talking and laughing to himself. Once the monks followed him, caught him, and made fun of him. He stopped, clapped his hands, and laughed greatly—Ha Ha!—for a spell, then left.

He looked like a tramp. His body and face were old and beat. Yet in every word he breathed was a meaning in line with the subtle principles of things, if only you thought of it deeply. Everything he said had a feeling of the Tao in it, profound and arcane secrets. His hat was made of birch bark, his clothes were ragged and worn out, and his shoes were wood. Thus men who have made it hide their tracks: unifying categories and interpenetrating things. On that long veranda calling and singing, in his words of reply Ha Ha!—the three worlds revolve. Sometimes at the villages and farms he laughed and sang with cowherds. Sometimes intractable, sometimes agreeable, his nature was happy of itself. But how could a person without wisdom recognize him?

I once received a position as a petty official at Tan-ch'iu. The day I was to depart, I had a bad headache. I called a doctor, but he couldn't cure me and it turned worse. Then I met a Buddhist Master named Feng-kan, who said he came from the Kuo-ch'ing Temple of T'ien-t'ai especially to visit me. I asked him to rescue me from my illness. He smiled and said, "The four realms are within the body; sickness comes from illusion. If you want to do away with it, you need pure water." Someone brought water to the Master, who spat it on me. In a moment the disease was rooted out. He then said, "There are miasmas in T'ai prefecture, when you get there take care of yourself." I asked him, "Are there any wise men in your area I could look on as Master?" He replied, "When you see him you don't recognize him, when you recognize him you don't see him. If you want to see him, you can't rely on appearances. Then you can see him. Han-shan is a Manjusri hiding at Kuo-ch'ing. Shih-te is a Samantabhadra. They look like poor fellows and act like madmen. Sometimes they go and sometimes they come. They work in the kitchen of the Kuo-ch'ing dining hall, tending the fire." When he was done talking he left.

I proceeded on my journey to my job at T'ai-chou, not forgetting this affair. I arrived three days later, immediately went

to a temple, and questioned an old monk. It seemed the Master had been truthful, so I gave orders to see if T'ang-hsing really contained a Han-shan and Shih-te. The District Magistrate reported to me: "In this district, seventy li west, is a mountain. People used to see a poor man heading from the cliffs to stay awhile at Kuo-ch'ing. At the temple dining hall is a similar man named Shih-te." I made a bow, and went to Kuo-ch'ing. I asked some people around the temple, "There used to be a Master named Feng-kan here. Where is his place? And where can Han-shan and Shih-te be seen?" A monk named Tao-ch'iao spoke up: "Feng-kan the Master lived in back of the library. Nowadays nobody lives there; a tiger often comes and roars. Han-shan and Shih-te are in the kitchen." The monk led me to Feng-kan's yard. Then he opened the gate: all we saw was tiger tracks. I asked the monks Tao-ch'iao and Pao-te, "When Feng-kan was here, what was his job?" The monks said, "He pounded and hulled rice. At night he sang songs to amuse himself." Then we went to the kitchen, before the stoves. Two men were facing the fire, laughing loudly. I made a bow. The two shouted HO! at me. They struck their hands together—Ha Ha!—great laughter. They shouted. Then they said, "Feng-kan—loose-tongued, loose-tongued. You don't recognize Amitabha, why be courteous to us?" The monks gathered round, surprise going through them. "Why has a big official bowed to a pair of clowns?" The two men grabbed hands and ran out of the temple. I cried, "Catch them"—but they quickly ran away. Han-shan returned to Cold Mountain. I asked the monks, "Would those two men be willing to settle down at this temple?" I ordered them to find a house, and to ask Han-shan and Shih-te to return and live at the temple.

I returned to my district and had two sets of clean clothes made, got some incense and such, and sent it to the temple —but the two men didn't return. So I had it carried up to Cold Mountain. The packer saw Han-shan, who called in a loud voice, "Thief! Thief!" and retreated into a mountain cave. He shouted, "I tell you man, strive hard!"—entered the cave and

was gone. The cave closed of itself and they weren't able to follow. Shih-te's tracks disappeared completely.

I ordered Tao-ch'iao and the other monks to find out how they had lived, to hunt up the poems written on bamboo, wood, stones, and cliffs—and also to collect those written on the walls of peoples' houses. There were more than three hundred. On the wall of the Earth-shrine Shih-te had written some *gatha*. It was all brought together and made into a book.

I hold to the principle of the Buddha-mind. It is fortunate to meet with men of Tao, so I have made this eulogy.

Twenty-four Poems by Han-shan

1

The path to Han-shan's place is laughable,
A path, but no sign of cart or horse.
Converging gorges—hard to trace their twists
Jumbled cliffs—unbelievably rugged.
A thousand grasses bend with dew,
A hill of pines hums in the wind.
And now I've lost the shortcut home,
Body asking shadow, how do you keep up?

2

In a tangle of cliffs I chose a place—
Bird-paths, but no trails for men.
What's beyond the yard?
White clouds clinging to vague rocks.
Now I've lived here—how many years—
Again and again, spring and winter pass.
Go tell families with silverware and cars
"What's the use of all that noise and money?"

3
In the mountains it's cold.
Always been cold, not just this year.
Jagged scarps forever snowed in
Woods in the dark ravines spitting mist.
Grass is still sprouting at the end of June,
Leaves begin to fall in early August.
And here am I, high on mountains,
Peering and peering, but I can't even see the sky.

4
I spur my horse through the wrecked town,
The wrecked town sinks my spirit.
High, low, old parapet-walls
Big, small, the aging tombs.
I waggle my shadow, all alone;
Not even the crack of a shrinking coffin is heard.
I pity all these ordinary bones,
In the books of the Immortals they are nameless.

5
I wanted a good place to settle:
Cold Mountain would be safe.
Light wind in a hidden pine—
Listen close—the sound gets better.
Under it a gray-haired man
Mumbles along reading Huang and Lao.
For ten years I haven't gone back home
I've even forgotten the way by which I came.

6

Men ask the way to Cold Mountain
Cold Mountain: there's no through trail.
In summer, ice doesn't melt
The rising sun blurs in swirling fog.
How did I make it?
My heart's not the same as yours.
If your heart was like mine
You'd get it and be right here.

7

I settled at Cold Mountain long ago,
Already it seems like years and years.
Freely drifting, I prowl the woods and streams
And linger watching things themselves.
Men don't get this far into the mountains,
White clouds gather and billow.
Thin grass does for a mattress,
The blue sky makes a good quilt.
Happy with a stone underhead
Let heaven and earth go about their changes.

8

Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders,
The wide creek, the mist-blurred grass.
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain
The pine sings, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the world's ties
And sit with me among the white clouds?

9

Rough and dark—the Cold Mountain trail,
Sharp cobbles—the icy creek bank.
Yammering, chirping—always birds
Bleak, alone, not even a lone hiker.
Whip, whip—the wind slaps my face
Whirled and tumbled—snow piles on my back.
Morning after morning I don't see the sun
Year after year, not a sign of spring.

10

I have lived at Cold Mountain
These thirty long years.
Yesterday I called on friends and family:
More than half had gone to the Yellow Springs.
Slowly consumed, like fire down a candle;
Forever flowing, like a passing river.
Now, morning, I face my lone shadow:
Suddenly my eyes are bleared with tears.

11

Spring-water in the green creek is clear
Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white
Silent knowledge—the spirit is enlightened of itself
Contemplate the void: this world exceeds stillness.

12

In my first thirty years of life
I roamed hundreds and thousands of miles.
Walked by rivers through deep green grass
Entered cities of boiling red dust.
Tried drugs, but couldn't make Immortal;
Read books and wrote poems on history.
Today I'm back at Cold Mountain:
I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears.

13

I can't stand these bird-songs
Now I'll go rest in my straw shack.
The cherry flowers out scarlet
The willow shoots up feathery.
Morning sun drives over blue peaks
Bright clouds wash green ponds.
Who knows that I'm out of the dusty world
Climbing the southern slope of Cold Mountain?

14

Cold Mountain has many hidden wonders,
People who climb here are always getting scared.
When the moon shines, water sparkles clear
When wind blows, grass swishes and rattles.
On the bare plum, flowers of snow
On the dead stump, leaves of mist.
At the touch of rain it all turns fresh and live
At the wrong season you can't ford the creeks.

15

There's a naked bug at Cold Mountain
With a white body and a black head.
His hand holds two book-scrolls,
One the Way and one its Power.
His shack's got no pots or oven,
He goes for a walk with his shirt and pants askew.
But he always carries the sword of wisdom:
He means to cut down senseless craving.

16

Cold Mountain is a house
Without beams or walls.
The six doors left and right are open
The hall is blue sky.
The rooms all vacant and vague
The east wall beats on the west wall
At the center nothing.

Borrowers don't bother me
In the cold I build a little fire
When I'm hungry I boil up some greens.
I've got no use for the kulak
With his big barn and pasture—
He just sets up a prison for himself.
Once in he can't get out.
Think it over—
You know it might happen to you.

17
If I hide out at Cold Mountain
Living off mountain plants and berries—
All my lifetime, why worry?
One follows his karma through.
Days and months slip by like water,
Time is like sparks knocked off flint.
Go ahead and let the world change—
I'm happy to sit among these cliffs.

18
Most T'ien-t'ai men
Don't know Han-shan
Don't know his real thought
& call it silly talk.

19
Once at Cold Mountain, troubles cease—
No more tangled, hung-up mind.
I idly scribble poems on the rock cliff,
Taking whatever comes, like a drifting boat.

20
Some critic tried to put me down—
"Your poems lack the Basic Truth of Tao"
And I recall the old-timers
Who were poor and didn't care.
I have to laugh at him,
He misses the point entirely,
Men like that
Ought to stick to making money.

21
I've lived at Cold Mountain—how many autumns.
Alone, I hum a song—utterly without regret.
Hungry, I eat one grain of Immortal-medicine
Mind solid and sharp; leaning on a stone.

22
On top of Cold Mountain the lone round moon
Lights the whole clear cloudless sky.
Honor this priceless natural treasure
Concealed in five shadows, sunk deep in the flesh.

23
My home was at Cold Mountain from the start,
Rambling among the hills, far from trouble.

Gone, and a million things leave no trace
Loosed, and it flows through the galaxies
A fountain of light, into the very mind—
Not a thing, and yet it appears before me:
Now I know the pearl of the Buddha-nature
Know its use: a boundless perfect sphere.

24
When men see Han-shan
They all say he's crazy
And not much to look at—
Dressed in rags and hides.
They don't get what I say
& I don't talk their language.
All I can say to those I meet:
"Try and make it to Cold Mountain."

NOTES

The preface:

Feng-kan is reckoned in the traditional line of Zen Masters, but in mid-T'ang the Zen people did not yet constitute a separate Buddhist sect. They were rather a "meditation-group" living in the mountains or the monasteries of the T'ien-t'ai (Japanese Tendai) sect, and the Vinaya (displine) sect.

Manjusri is the Bodhisattva of wisdom, Samantabhadra the Bodhisattva of love, Amitabha the Bodhisattva of boundless compassion.

A *gatha* is a short Buddhist poem.

A doggerel eulogistic poem, also by Lu Ch'iu-yin, follows the biography. I have not translated it.

The poems:

4—a rare example of a poem in the literary manner. Han-shan usually writes in the colloquial, as very few Chinese poets have done.

5—the gray-haired man is Han-shan himself. Huang is "The Book of the Yellow Emperor" and Lao is Lao-tzu, the *Tao Te Ching*.

15—the Way and its Power, i.e., the *Tao Te Ching*.

22, 23—the full moon, the pearl. Symbols of the Buddha-nature inherent in all beings.

Most of Han-shan's poems are written in the "old-song" (*ku-shih*) style, with five or seven characters to a line.

DOUGLAS WOOLF: The Flyman

When the moving men had shoved and strapped the last piece, the last slippery convenience, inside the moving van, George Nader looked about him with very little sense of loss, for everything that remained, the flypaper, the swatters, and he believed the turtle bowl, was his. Had Zoe been divorcing him and taking along her legal property as dowry to another man, the division of goods would have been exactly this, except of course that she would then have been leaving George himself behind to enjoy the pure, seeming inconvenience of the house. He would never know what time it was: only sit at the backdoor and watch the cactus shadows on the sand outside, perhaps noting whether the sun or the moon was moving them. With the hours thus confused there would be no prompt, rude guests to demand his silent presence in the livingroom; their polished mahogany cage would be gone, not to mention their electricity. He would look without commitment at the mirrorless walls, for the loathsome electric razor would be buzzing the fuzz on some other cheek or the stubble underneath Zoe's arms. He would sleep, night or day, in the built-in bathtub, and survive on grapefruit and oranges and the neighbors' eggs. Delighted with such pictures, smiling upon Zoe's swollen rear, he took up a handy swatter and brandished it enchantingly until the men returned.

What he liked about the moving men was their pride in being watched. They spoke in low rough voices, cursing only humorously when his flypaper caught them up, pausing occasionally in their work to compliment Zoe upon this piece or that but once outside tossing her furniture quite insultingly among them as though it were simply so much stuff which they alone knew the real value of. At the very first, when they had stood in the livingroom wondering where to begin, he had said, "Take everything with faces, or legs," and had settled in a chair to watch how nicely it worked out that way, with the exception of a few

planters of ivy and the pasteboard boxes of odds and ends, until they had taken the chair itself from under him. "Easy now," he had standing said, and when they smiled expectantly as though hoping he had found some failure in their work: "Everything but me, that is." And now he stood grinning as they shoved respectfully past Zoe at the door, where she hoped her presence would urge them to use a little more care, less skill, in their wild slippery sprint to the van, but as the van door cracked shut he sobered his face for her turn to him.

"Looks different, doesn't it?" he quickly said, not in sympathy or even sincerity but only wanting to take the words from her pursing mouth. "Bleak?"

"It does, it does," she agreed, forced to it, but hastily regained herself: "We filled two-thirds of a van, you know."

"Big baby too," he shot.

"It was," said Zoe.

He looked fiercely away from her fuzzy head, to the gray, permanent shadow of the departed television-radio. What had she expected of him once, that he had not given her? He supposed that at first it had been children, although as a struggling, wild-eyed veteran his reasons had been entirely economic, plausible, and she had agreed with him. Only in time, as he progressed, had the question become less economic than eugenic, and she had agreed again. How could she not. For it had grown increasingly clear that no child of his could have the common view, or chance. Today the question was no longer asked, yet he felt that secretly, in whatever depths she had, Zoe would have welcomed the pleasures of an abortion, the living proof that in fact she could create. Few men would help her prove it now, he and time had taken care of that. So they had settled on an easier enmity, as less harrowing, more mentionable, her loss of the housewife's sweet dependence which he had so easily usurped for himself. Deprived of her empty days, Zoe had filled her nights with appliances. Looked at in this way the unwieldy procession which he had just witnessed could not be said to

betoken Zoe's unfathered children so much as a bitter, accurate accounting of Zoe's paychecks, and this cynical view of it made him able to turn to her again. "Wait until we get up north," Zoe said.

"Oh, wait." He followed her zigzag course toward the kitchen, even he finding it oddly difficult to avoid the flypaper strips with the furniture no longer there to inhibit him, and he fancied he heard soft curses among Zoe's fat breaths. Watching her unwind from a gummy strip, he felt himself struck by a change in her appearance, the first he could recall in years. It was as though the moving men had carted off not only her movables but her very makeup itself, that pink, almost livid glaze with which she regularly hid from him and all the world the face he had loved twelve, maybe fifteen years before. And seeing in this abrupt way how dry and sucked of life she was, finally justifying her endeavor to look like anyone else but Zoe, he felt a sudden terror of time and reached his hand to her. "Zoe."

Zoe took his hand.

"I'm sorry, Zoe."

She patted it, and now he watched her puffy fingers drape gummed paper along the soft, freckled flesh of his outstretched arm until it clung to the hairs there securely enough for her to draw free of it. Looking up from dead and drying flies, he saw her bright black eyes twinkle with something between defiance and disgust. "Why this?"

"Because," she said. "It's yours, isn't it?"

"Ah." His hand shot sidewise for a buzzing fly, caught it effortlessly in mid-flight and tossed it stunned to the floor for his ready foot to quash. There had been a time when Zoe would have watched this exhibition with genuine admiration, but today she turned sharply off as though he had belched or gassed the place. Well, as the doctor said, some men hate Mexicans and Republicans, some beat their wives.

"George, promise you'll have it all cleared out when I get back?"

"Back?"

"From the market, George."

He suddenly smiled, at the picture of them following that two-thirds van of conveniences through eighteen hundred miles of ice and snow and stopping from time to time to eat cold canned goods beside the road. Certainly he would not build a fire, and he could not imagine heat from a fire of Zoe's. This was not a new thought, but he added to it now the one that Zoe would surely have packed the can opener away in the kitchen appliance box, and he spoke hurriedly lest she too might think of it. "You hurry right along," he said. "I'll take care of everything."

"Well . . ." He followed once more as she zagged through the kitchen, the front room, the hall, somehow this time escaping entanglement but turning finally at the front door to seek her purse. With all the furniture gone, there was nowhere for Zoe to hunt. Even at best, things had been, as he thought, fuzzy around their home. For Zoe's talents were almost purely operative, or rather her affinities: she was a superlative driver of automobiles, unhampered by any comprehension of what made them run; she could twirl painful clarity from television sets, just so long as their extension cords and socket plugs were good; and of course over both their lives loomed that cryptically initialed machine, monstrously dialed, with which she made airplane parts whose names and places she did not know. Otherwise there was that fuzziness, that flapping, searching, beseeching, wasted fuss which made him grind his teeth and wince. But we do not hate people, he recalled, not even for enduring us, and grinned a wistful grin at Zoe before turning his attention to his papered arm. "Look on the mantelpiece," he said, and imagining Zoe's bleak glare of thanks waved his swatter graciously.

He felt her departure in much the same way that he felt the flypaper tear free of his hair and flesh, as a paradox of pain, relief. He tensed to the clattering porch, to the car's whamming doors, to the pitiable whine of a young motor overtaxed, and

finally to the smothering cloud of dust that seeped through the fine-meshed screens, yet he was glad. When he turned it was almost as though Zoe had really left, scattering her own ashes behind her over the neighborhood; in twenty minutes, he knew, she would be back to stir them up again.

Meanwhile he did not mind too much what he had to do. It was the thought alone that had almost paralyzed him, when the furniture and Zoe had still been there, the thought of tearing down all his ingenious, tactically flawless stations without the possibility or necessity of ever replacing them. But now in the empty house his defenses hung like so much random paper, forlornly grouped, disorganized. What he did, quickly, was start at the front door and work his way in as nearly a straight line as possible along the south wall, yanking flypapers as he came to them and draping them in careless yet attractive disarray over the handle of the swatter which he still held. Then quickly back along the other wall and crisscross here and there about the room. When he had filled his swatter he reached for another, presently a third, but half a fourth finished the livingroom. The bedroom and kitchen yielded two swattersful apiece, one each for the bathroom, pantry, hall. Back in the livingroom he stuck his entire collection upended in the empty turtle bowl. Gathering the remaining, unused swatters, he added them one by one with flourishes to his bouquet, stood back to pass on it.

He was glad to have found some use for the turtle bowl. It had not worked at all. Despite weeks of enthusiastic experimentation, under the most favorable conditions he could devise, George had never known a turtle to catch a fly. Place twelve flies with two hungry turtles overnight in a covered bowl, and in the morning twelve unmolested flies emerge. Put syrup on a turtle's nose, a fly may eat his sweets in peace. It did not work! Only if you dropped a fly into a turtle's water would it partake, and George refused to offer such sacrifices, dead or alive, simply that a turtle might stuff himself. He donated his turtles to the neighborhood and turned his attention to new pursuits. Chrono-

logically the gyrotraps had come next after the turtle failure, and it was these he would attend to as soon as he had disposed of the mess in the turtle bowl.

Most weekends he did not go outside, except very briefly at lizard rotation times, for these were George Ingersoll's days at home. Not that he disliked the other George, he simply did not like the sense of driving him indoors. There had been a time when their weekends had been quite otherwise, they had become almost more than neighbors, finding several dependable interests in common such as their handicaps (mostly physical for the other George), their memories of beautiful, terrible northern winters which in past years they had somehow both survived, and more particularly their memory of North Africa and its big, blood-sucking flies which a man could look down upon, whether feeding on his own sores or on a corpse of whatever nationality, and say this is Evil, it isn't the Jerries after all. They had of course also had their common dismay at finding themselves banished by doctors to another Africa, a New World Sahara, their sense of loneliness and exile in this wasted land and their exasperated fascination with its flora, fauna and insect life. Weekends they had fought the desert together side by side in their backyards, tearing up its cactus and tumbleweed, coupling their two hoses to lay its dust, attacking its blackwidows, scorpions, flies with lethal insecticides, all the while offering bitter, gasping encouragement to one another across the fence. But soon it had become clear that their intensities were not the same, that one could be satisfied with a mere surface tidiness that the other fiercely disdained. George Ingersoll spent more and more time resting on his canvas chairs, now looking contentedly at his swept backyard, now at George, his occasional shouted encouragement grown amused, polite. A certain restraint had grown between them as nowadays it so easily did (people no longer visited the Naders, they came in small explorative groups instead) and it ended with their reverting to a neighborly distrustfulness. George understood. The other still had the so-called job, was employ-

able, while George himself had long ago lost the benign effects of the six-day purge. He understood, yet it surely hurt him that his neighbor no longer showed sympathy for what he was trying to do, neither took time to enquire about his experiments nor looked at them. Thus he was surprised, or a little angry, to find George on this last day lingering outside, hanging on the fence above the rubbish cans which they had found it easiest to continue sharing stealthily. "Morning George . . . Ah morning George." They performed this ceremony solemnly, each glancing sidewise to see if the other still smiled at it. Neither did, though with George Ingersoll it was hard to say, for pain and the desert sun had long ago combined to draw back the brittle skin around his mouth into a permanent grimace. Whenever George looked up at him he was unpleasantly aware of his own soft juiciness. "Hello, George," he said again, and falsely coughed. "How have you been?"

"Oh fine, fine," George Ingersoll said, and now he did appear to smile at a ghastly joke. "And you?"

George also smiled. "Haven't seen you around much, George," he said, at the last minute muffling the "for a year or two."

"Yes, been busy inside," was said. There was a pause, while George tugged at the stubborn garbage lid. "Well, Zoe's transfer came through at last?"

"Yes, it came through," George said, banging the lid with his free fist.

"Give it one on the side," George Ingersoll advised, and George gave it a brutal one. "No, one on the side of the *top*," and George belabored it everywhere. He put down the turtle bowl, grasped the lid handle with both big hands and lifted the entire barrel off the ground, shaking it furiously from side to side. But we do not take out our anger on inanimate objects, and cursing he let the whole thing drop. The lid bounced off. "Ah," he said, swatters clattering in.

"I wouldn't mind having that bowl, if you're done with it."

George passed the bowl over his shoulder, over the fence.

"It's no good," he said, wiping his hands of it.

"Looks like just the thing for Miriam's fish."

"Oh fish—I never did try fish."

George Ingersoll patted the turtle bowl. "I don't suppose you'll need any of this, up north?"

"No, none of it."

Still patting, George Ingersoll glanced at his neighbor's yard, then shamefully away again. "What about your lizards, George?"

George, who had stooped for the garbage lid, straightened quickly to the sidewise face. "You'd like them, George?"

"No no no, just curious."

"Ah." George came down hard, jamming the lid back on for George.

"I don't suppose they'd live through the winter there, even if you needed them?"

George shook his head, and it was almost as though he were shivering.

George Ingersoll too looked cold. "George, what does the doctor say?"

"The doctor? Not much—it might be good for me." Probably what the doctor had said to Zoe was that anything, even painful death, could be considered a benefice. But the doctor was no medical man, George had long ago passed them. "They say there's work up there, you know."

"I certainly hope so, George." When they looked briefly at one another now, it was almost in their old way, with common memories. George Ingersoll put out his hand. "I certainly hope the change of climate is good for you."

"Well, thanks, George," he said, taking the knotty hand reluctantly in his own soft freckled one. What he would like to have known before he took it was whether his eyes blurred at the sympathy of a friend or at the certain euphemisms of a hypocrite.

"We'll certainly miss you, George."

"Oh, well now," George said, and it almost blinded him, his

dubious sentiment. He yanked free his hand to wheel away. "*Well* now, George."

"I certainly . . . " Fortunately some of the Ingersoll children were fighting now, and hugging the turtle bowl George moved to disentangle them. "I'll see you, George."

Oh oh oh, will you now, George thought, stalking quickly along the fence to the garage, the shop. He emptied the wheelbarrow of rusty tools and dragged it wickedly to the shop's locked door. He had the key, had it at all times on a string looped around his belt. Quickly inside, he swung the door on howling Ingersolls. Two years ago he had papered the ceiling and walls with flypaper (no paste, no waste, the flies make their own design) but now in the broken light of the one narrow window he noted how the ceiling curled and peeled, the walls writhed disgustingly, their glue had dried. The place smelled grayly of dust and wings, nor did the 200-watt ceiling lamp do much to clear the atmosphere. As it turned out, he would not have to redecorate.

His inventions lay everywhere, on the benches and shelves, and on the floor. These were mostly the gyrotraps, tiny razor-blade fans which he had connected in series to a motor salvaged from a Lionel train. Each fan was designed to fit snugly into a No. 2 can liberally coated with marmalade. (These had worked, although their blades required daily honing and from time to time their shafts would gum.) Then too there was the syrup door: a delicate device which the weight of three inverted flies could trip, slamming them against a red brick wall. (There were only three of these, for he had been unable to make them react to the weight of a single fly, and it had tormented him to think how many strays escaped.) There were several examples of the Infallible Fly Bath, simply a solution of molasses and hydrochloric acid (which he made himself by combining sulphuric acid with common table salt) in small glass tubs. These had worked very satisfactorily indeed, until neighbors began to understand what was happening to the noses of their cats.

So it did not bother him very much to dump everything in a box and wheel it out for the garbage man. He did at the last minute leave one example of each behind, on the slim chance that some future scientist might find them a starting point, a useful groundwork for further exploration in the field. Not that this possibility greatly moved him either, for in his heart he knew that with the lizards he had come as close to a final answer to the problem as any man could, or would.

Here at last was what did hurt, having to gather his beer bottles now at the very time when he had finally perfected a formula for their rotation, a formula based on the observed frequency of flies at a given location at a given hour of a given day, as modified by such known variables as temperature, cloud covering, wind, humidity, and taking into account too such intangibles as the probable traumatic effects upon flies of his increasingly devastating war against their kind. Yet if the rotation formula was a marvel of deviousness, the trap itself was almost casual in its simplicity. Squeeze a small, vaselined lizard into an empty beer bottle, feed him just enough flies to prevent his escape; now coat the bottle mouth with almost anything at all, and wait. (No electricity, no mechanical parts, after a few days at large a lizard may be used again.) He gathered the bottles quickly but gently, arranging them in neat tiers in the wheelbarrow, and he wheeled them smoothly out over the desert to a rock he knew. There he cracked each of the forty-eight bottles with deft little taps, being careful that the lizards were not cut by the broken glass. Even at that, and despite his practice of selecting his lizards for healthiness, one lizard had succumbed. Impossible to say how many flies he had taken first, although in death he did look well-satisfied. George buried him. Now he stood for a while watching the others stagger over the desert, their bloated bodies unwieldy on their stiff short legs. Facing his wheelbarrow toward the house, he steered with care among his glutted friends. Ahead Zoe's dust was in the air, and Zoe herself waited at the kitchen door for him. "You did a nice job," she said.

"Thanks, Zoe."

"All ready now?"

Silently he looked about his experimental yard, a desert once again. He raised his eyes to an evilly buzzing fly, too high for him, and he did not move or speak until it came back again. He did not snare it at once but watched it cautiously circle his head, allowing it this last time the appearance of teasing him. When it finally settled on a freckled arm, he picked it off and held it out to view. "When you are, Zoe."

" Oh, why don't you get in the car," she said, and she followed him.

"You've remembered everything?"

"Yes."

It almost seemed she had. The canned goods lay boxed in the front seat, a shiny new opener visible. He knew their bags had been in the trunk for several days, and climbing into the car, into the back, he could smell the sweet insecticide. Despite the noonday temperature, all windows were tightly shut. He smiled at how narrowly Zoe opened the driver's door, how nearly flat she squeezed, how quickly she slammed once she was in.

"Mind if I open a window, Zoe?"

"Please, let's not."

"It's hot in here."

"It's hot everywhere."

"It smells."

"Let's wait until we're underway, at least," as the motor howled.

"Ah." Outside, George Ingersoll was leading his wife forward to see them off, and Zoe stopped the car to point the friendly neighbors out to George. All arms were raised; with the windows up the pantomimic mouths could have said anything, oh-oh-oh perhaps. Now the saving children must have yelled, for the Ingersolls turned their wagging heads and ran. Releasing brakes, Zoe gaily blotted out the farewell scene.

"Now?"

"Wait until we're on the highway, George."

So he sat waiting, his eyes closed to the dusty light, his breath almost closed off too, until he felt the car spring free of sand and heard the tires take up their gleeful howl on a highway paved with kitten fur. "Now, Zoe?"

"Oh, *wait*."

But he leaned forward anyway, not toward the window but toward the driver's seat, his hand going up. He might have slapped down on her then and there, had Zoe not caught the movement in her overhead looking glass. He hung there rigidly.

"Did you see one, George?"

"No."

"Well, please remember our frontseat rule."

"Sorry, Zoe." Leaning back again, tilting his head to rest, he continued to look at Zoe. But from the lower edges of his sight he could see his great short-sleeved spotty arms, folded across his chest, and from the fuzzy edges of his consciousness could hear his big hands slapping quietly.

"What now?" Zoe wanted to know.

"Don't worry, Zoe." He watched her shaking head. "You're happy, Zoe."

"Well?"

"No, I'm glad for you," he said. His hands were working harder now, moving rhythmically and conscientiously from freckle to freckle over his juicy arms, as Zoe turned round to him. Slap slap slap, he answered her, "I'm really glad for you."

"The temperature in St. Paul last night was two below."

"Oh, it was? Below?"

"Snow is probably falling now."

"It *is*?"

In her looking glass she smiled at him. "They say the winters are nine months long."

"That's all right," he said, and also smiled, for he would have lots to do.

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA: The Audience

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: *In the chronology of Lorca's theater, "The Audience"* (El Público) *is roughly contemporary with* La Zapatera Prodigiosa, Don Perlimplín, Retablillo de Don Cristobal, *and* Así Que Pasen Cinco Años *(1929-31); it precedes the cycle of folk tragedies which begins with* Bodas de Sangre *(1933). Though biographers have assigned the play to the interval between the poet's arrival in New York City and his return to Spain (1929-30), the circumstances of its completion are far from clear. A manuscript of the play was known to the poet's brother, Francisco García Lorca, and to certain of his friends; and one source, Alfredo de la Guardia, reports that Lorca told him in Buenos Aires in 1933 that he knew of no theatrical company that would "bestir itself to bring his play to the stage," and "no audience that would tolerate it without flying into a rage." De la Guardia has suggested that perhaps the play was never "finished at all"; and Ángel del Río believes that Lorca may have deliberately withheld it from production. What is certain is that Lorca, in 1934, consented to the publication in* Los Cuatro Vientos *(Madrid) of two scenes from "A Drama in Five Acts" which might otherwise have disappeared entirely.* BEN BELITT.]

ROMAN QUEEN

[*A figure completely covered with red vine tendrils is seated on a capital, playing a flute. Another figure covered with gilded bells dances, stage center.*]

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: If I turned into a cloud—
FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'd turn into an eye.
FIGURE OF THE BELLS: If I turned into a turd—
FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'd turn into a fly.
FIGURE OF THE BELLS: If I turned into a head of hair—
FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'd turn into a kiss.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: If I turned into a breast?

FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'd turn into a white sheet.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS [*sarcastically*]: Bravo!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: And if I turned into a moonfish?

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'd turn into a knife!

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*as he stops dancing*]: Why must you torture me? Why? If you love me—why won't you go where I want you to go? If I turned into a moonfish, you'd turn into seaweed or a wave; and to put yourself even further, you'd turn into a full moon. All this talk about knives! You don't want to kiss me! You just want to keep me from dancing! And I can only love you by dancing.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'll circle the bed and the furniture with you—but I won't tag along wherever it pleases you to take me—because you're a schemer! If you turned into a moonfish, I'd slit you open with a knife—because, do you know, I'm a man—Adam himself wasn't manlier—and you ought to be manlier still. You ought to be such a man that a branch wouldn't snap at your passing. But there's nothing manly about you. If it weren't for my flute, you'd run off to the moon—that little lace handkerchief moon, dripping with blood like a girl!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS [*timidly*]: What if I turned into an ant?

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*vigorously*]: I'd turn into a clod.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS [*stronger*]: And if I turned into a clod?

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*feebler*]: I'd turn into water.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS [*quivering*]: And if I turned into water?

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*fainting*]: I'd turn into a moonfish.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS [*tremulously*]: And if I turned into a moonfish?

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*waking up*]: I'd turn into a knife! A knife whetted four long springs ago!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Take me to the pool and drown me! You'd see me stark naked then—that's the only way!

You suppose that blood frightens me?

I know how to handle you! You think I don't know you?

I'll handle you properly—you'll see! If I said to you then: What if I turned into a moonfish? you'd answer: I would turn into a sac of fine fish roe!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: Get an axe and lop off my legs! Out of my sight—a plague on you! I despise you! I hope you sink right to the bottom! I spit on you!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: So that's how you want it? Goodbye! It's nothing to me! If I go down to the ruins, there'll be plenty to love me there—I'll love many times over.

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*agonized*]: Where are you going? Where are you off to?

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Didn't you order me off?

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*in a feeble voice*]: No, you mustn't run off. What if I turned into a grain of sand?

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'd turn into a whiplash.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: And if I turned into a sac of fine fish roe?

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'd still be a whip. I'd whip you with guitar strings!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: Please don't whip me!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'd whip you with boat cables.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: Please—not in the stomach!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'd whip you with the stamens of an orchid, I would!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: You'll beat me stone-blind, in the end!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Yes, blind! Because you won't behave like a man. As for me—I'm a man, a real he-man! I'm such a wonder of a man that I faint dead away every time the hunters awaken. I'm a genuine man, such a figure of a man that my teeth grate with the pain of it if so much as a thistle snaps, no matter how tiny. I'm a real giant. I'm gigantic—I'm such a gigantical giant I could slice through a rock with the fingernail of a baby!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'm waiting for night to come. The white of the ruins undoes me. I'm waiting for the chance to crawl at your feet.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Oh, no! No! Why do you say such

things to me? It's you who should push me about as you please. Are you a man or aren't you? Even more than Adam was?

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*falling to the ground*]: Ay! Ay!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS [*coming closer, in a low voice*]: What if I turned into a capital on a column?

FIGURE OF THE VINE: O my God!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: You'd turn into the shadow a capital casts—nothing more! Later, Helen—my own, darling Helen —would come to my bed—while you under the cushions there, you'd be stretched out in a sweat; and even your sweat wouldn't be yours. It would be a coachman's sweat, or a stoker's sweat, or the sweat of a surgeon cutting into a cancer; then I'd turn into a moonfish and you'd be nothing but a powder smudge passing from one hand to another!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: What, again? You're sniveling again? I'll faint dead away so the men in the fields will come running! I'll have to call out the black men—those monstrous big black men slashed by the yucca blades, who fight day and night with the river mud. Get up off the ground, you coward! Yesterday I stopped at the smelter's shop and had a chain made to order. —Don't you skulk out of sight now, Eva, you sow! But chain or no chain, I was up all night crying because my wrists and my ankles were hurting me so. [*The Figure of the Vine blows a silver whistle.*]

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: What are you doing? [*The whistle blows again.*] I know what you're up to, I can still run away.

FIGURE OF THE VINE [*getting up*]: Run, if you want to.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'll defend myself with a blade of grass!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: Just try to defend yourself! [*Blows the whistle.*]

[*From the roof tumbles down a Boy dressed in red tights.*]

BOY: The Emperor! The Emperor! The Emperor!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: The Emperor!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'll play your part now. You mustn't let on who you are. It would cost me my life!

BOY: The Emperor! The Emperor! The Emperor!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Everything was only pretend: everything! We were only playing a game. Now I'll mimic your voice and wait on the Emperor. Get behind that big capital there. Pretend no one has told you anything. You'll find a cow there boiling a mess for the soldiers.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: It's the Emperor; we're in for it now! You've broken the spider's thread and I feel my big feet are turning tiny and horrible again.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Tea? A spot of tea? Where might one get a hot drink in these ruins?

BOY [*on the ground*]: The Emperor! The Emperor! The Emperor!

[*A trumpet flourish; enter the Roman Emperor. With him, a Centurion in a yellow tunic, his flesh gray. Behind, four horses with trumpeters. The Boy approaches the Emperor, who takes him in his arms; they disappear behind the capitals.*]

CENTURION: The Emperor is looking for one.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: I'm one.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I'm one.

CENTURION: Which one of you two is the one?

FIGURE OF THE VINE: I am.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: I am.

CENTURION: The Emperor will discover which one of you two is the one. With a knife and a spitball. Devil take the lot of you! It's people like you who keep me running up hill and down dale and sleeping on gravel. Me with a wife as pretty as a mountain. She litters four or five at a turn, and never at midday under the trees. I've got two hundred sons. There's many more coming! Devil take the lot of you! [*Spits and starts singing.*]

[*A loud, protracted cry is heard behind the column. Enter the Emperor, mopping his forehead. He strips off his black gloves, then his red gloves, and reveals hands of a classical whiteness.*]

EMPEROR [*petulantly*]: Which of you two is the one?

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Sire, I am one.

EMPEROR: One is one and will always be one. I've lopped off the heads of more than forty young fellows who wouldn't admit it.

CENTURION [*spitting*]: One is one and nothing more than one.

EMPEROR: There's no such thing as two.

CENTURION: Because if there were, the Emperor wouldn't be searching the highways and byways.

EMPEROR [*to the Centurion*]: Strip them down!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Sire, I am one. This is a beggar here, he feeds on roots in the ruins.

EMPEROR: Keep your distance!

FIGURE OF THE VINE: But surely you recognize me! You know who I am. [*He tears away the vine tendrils and reveals a naked figure, plaster white.*]

EMPEROR [*embracing him*]: This one is one.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: And will always be one. If you kiss me now, I'll open my mouth and skewer my throat with your sword.

EMPEROR: I'll do it.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: *Oh, leave my head in the ruins for loving.*
The head of one who always was one.

EMPEROR [*sighing*]: Yes, one.

CENTURION [*to the Emperor*]: It doesn't come easy, but he's yours now.

FIGURE OF THE VINE: He's his because he never can have him.

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Treason! Treason!

CENTURION: Quiet, you gutter-rat! Spawn of a broomstick!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: Gonzalo! Help! Help me! Gonzalo!

[*He tugs at a column, which opens out into the white screen of the First Scene. From behind it emerge the three, bearded Men and the Stage Director.*]

1ST MAN: Treason!

FIGURE OF THE BELLS: He's betrayed us all!

DIRECTOR: Treason!

[*The Emperor is clasped by the Figure of the Vine.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE FIVE

[*A bed is seen, stage center—a perpendicular, front view like that in a primitive painting; on it, a Naked Old Man crowned with blue thorns. Backstage, arches and stairways leading to the boxes of a large theater. Stage right, the façade of a university. As the curtain rises, we hear a burst of applause.*]

NAKED MAN: When will you be finished?

MALE NURSE [*entering rapidly*]: When the rumpus is over.

NAKED MAN: What do they want?

MALE NURSE: They demand the death of the stage director.

NAKED MAN: What are they saying about me?

MALE NURSE: Nothing.

NAKED MAN: What about Gonzalo? Any word of him?

MALE NURSE: They're searching for him in the ruins.

NAKED MAN: I wish I were dead! How much blood has been cupped out of me?

MALE NURSE: Fifty cups. It's time for your dose of gall; later, at eight, I'll be by with a scalpel to probe into that side wound.

NAKED MAN: It's the one with most of the vitamins in it.

MALE NURSE: That's right.

NAKED MAN: Will they release the people under the arena?

MALE NURSE: On the contrary. The soldiers and engineers are sealing off all the exits.

NAKED MAN: How long before we pull into Jerusalem?

MALE NURSE: Three more stations—if the coal holds out.

NAKED MAN: O my Father, let this cup of bitterness pass from me!

MALE NURSE: That's quite enough! That's the third thermometer you've broken.

[*Enter the Students. They are wearing black capes and red hoods.*]

1ST STUDENT: Why don't we polish up our weapons?

2ND STUDENT: The alley is full of armed men; it would be hard to make a getaway there.

3RD STUDENT: And the horses?

5TH STUDENT: The horses managed to break through the roof of the stage.

4TH STUDENT: When they had me locked up in the tower I could see whole herds of them climbing the hill. They went with the stage director.

1ST STUDENT: Is there an orchestra pit in this theater?

2ND STUDENT: The orchestra pit is barred to the public. Better stay where we are.

[*A burst of applause. The Nurse helps the Naked Man to a sitting position and arranges his pillows.*]

NAKED MAN: I'm thirsty.

MALE NURSE: They've sent to the theater for some water.

4TH STUDENT: The first bomb of the Revolution grazed the head of the rhetoric professor.

2ND STUDENT: To the great satisfaction of his wife. She'll have so much to do now, they'll have to install two taps in her nipples.

3RD STUDENT: They say that a horse climbs up her veranda every night.

1ST STUDENT: It was she who saw everything happen from a transom in the theater and gave the alarm.

4TH STUDENT: Even though the poets were setting up ladders to finish her off, she kept squawking till the mob came to her rescue.

2ND STUDENT: What's her name?

3RD STUDENT: Helena.

1ST STUDENT [*aside*]: Selene.

2ND STUDENT [*to the 1st Student*]: What's wrong?

1ST STUDENT: I'm afraid to go out.

[*The two Thieves come down the stairs. Some Ladies in evening clothes suddenly appear in the boxes. The Students talk among themselves.*]

1ST LADY: Are the carriages still at the door?

2ND LADY: How perfectly ghastly!

3RD LADY: The stage director has been found in the family vault.

1ST LADY: And Romeo?

4TH LADY: They were tearing his clothes off when we left.

1ST BOY: The audience is saying that the poet should be dragged by wild horses.

1ST LADY: But why? The play was so amusing; the Revolution has no right to desecrate graves.

2ND LADY: The speech and the stage effects were so lifelike. Why should we bother to drool over skeletons?

1ST BOY: That's what I say. The scene in the family vault was sensational. But I knew it was fake when I took one look at Juliet's feet. They were the teeniest things in the world!

2ND LADY: How screaming! Do you really object?

1ST BOY: Yes, I do: they were ever too tiny for the feet of a woman! Too perfect, too perfectly feminine! They were a man's feet, invented by a man!

2ND LADY: How perfectly ghastly!

[*Noises and the clashing of rapiers come from the theater.*]

3RD LADY: Will we be able to get out of here?

1ST BOY: The revolution is just reaching the cathedral. Let's leave by the stairway. [*They exit.*]

4TH STUDENT: The rumpus began when they saw that Romeo and Juliet were really in love.

2ND STUDENT: Just the other way round! The rumpus began when they saw they didn't love each other at all and never really could!

4TH STUDENT: The audience is clever enough to see through all that. That's why they protested.

2ND STUDENT: Exactly! The skeletons loved one another and were livid with passion, but the costumes were never in love. There were several times when the audience could see that Juliet's train was crawling with disgusting little toads.

4TH STUDENT: People never take notice of costumes in public performances. The Revolution broke out when they found the real Juliet gagged under the seats, smothered in cotton to keep her from screaming.

1ST BOY: That's just where everybody makes the big mistake; that's why the theater is dying. The audience doesn't dare cut into the cardboard and silk that the poet knocks together in his bedroom. Romeo might just as well be a bird and Juliet a stone. He might be a grain of salt and Juliet a roadmap. What does it matter to the audience?

4TH STUDENT: Not a thing! But a bird can't be a cat, and a stone can't be a wave!

2ND STUDENT: It's a question of form, a matter of masks. A cat can be a frog and a winter moon can easily be a bundle of firewood and frostbitten worms. The audience must doze on the language; it oughtn't to look through the columns for bleating sheep and clouds sailing the sky.

4TH STUDENT: That's why the Revolution broke out. The director opened the trapdoors and the people could see how false veins of poison had really killed off many children. Life doesn't supply us with make-believe signatures—only a barometer's hair that they carry behind.

2ND STUDENT: Anyway, must Romeo and Juliet be a man and a woman for the scene in the vault to come off in a touching and true-to-life style?

1ST STUDENT: Not necessarily—that's what the director's whole genius intended to prove.

4TH STUDENT: How do you mean—"not necessarily"? You might just as well stop the machinery and scatter your wheat over sheet metal!

2ND STUDENT: What good would that do? In the end, they would sell all the mushrooms and maybe the throbbing would grow more intense and disturbing. What it comes to is this: we can tell what ripens a kernel of wheat, but we can't say what fattens fungus.

5TH STUDENT [*leaving the boxes*]: Here comes the judge! Before killing them off, the scene in the vault will be run off again.

4TH STUDENT: Let's go. You'll see I was right.

2ND STUDENT: That's right. Let's watch the last of the authentically feminine Juliets ever to be exhibited in a theater. [*They exit rapidly.*]

NAKED MAN: Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.

MALE NURSE [*to the Thieves*]: Why have you come at this hour?

THIEVES: The prompter's mistake.

MALE NURSE: Have you had your injections?

THIEVES: We have. [*They seat themselves at the foot of the bed with lighted tapers. The stage remains in semidarkness. Enter the Prompter.*]

MALE NURSE: A fine time to round up the cast!

PROMPTER: I'm terribly sorry. But the beard of Joseph of Arimathea was lost.

MALE NURSE: Is Surgery ready?

PROMPTER: Only the candlesticks, chalice, and capsules of camphorated oil are missing.

MALE NURSE: Get a move on. [*Exit Prompter.*]

NAKED MAN: Is anything missing?

MALE NURSE: Nothing to speak of. The bells have just tolled for the third time. It's time for the Emperor to unmask Pontius Pilate.

1ST BOY [*entering with Ladies*]: Please, everybody! Let's have no panic, please!

1ST LADY: How ghastly to be lost in a theater and not find the exit!

2ND LADY: What frightened me most was the cardboard wolf and the four snakes in the tin swimming pool.

3RD LADY: If we only could climb to the top of the ruins, we'd think we were seeing real daybreak; but we stumbled over the curtains and my cloth-of-gold slippers are spattered with

oil.

4TH LADY [*approaching the arches*]: They are playing the scene in the family vault again. Now the fire will certainly break through the doors, because when I saw it a moment ago, the guardsmen's fingers were smoking and it was too hot to handle.

1ST BOY: We can reach one of the balconies from the branch of that tree and call for help.

MALE NURSE [*in a low voice*]: When will the death agony begin?

THIEVES [*raising their tapers*]: *Sanctus. Sanctus. Sanctus.*

NAKED MAN: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

MALE NURSE: You're running two minutes fast!

NAKED MAN: But the nightingale has just finished singing!

MALE NURSE: Certainly. And the drugstores are open for agony.

NAKED MAN: For the agony of all lonely men on platforms and trains.

MALE NURSE [*looking at his watch, in a loud voice*]: Bring in the sheet. Take care that the breeze you raise doesn't blow off your wigs! Hurry!

THIEVES: *Sanctus. Sanctus. Sanctus.*

NAKED MAN: It is finished.

[*The bed spins on an axis and the Naked Man disappears. On the reverse side of the bed the 1st Man is seen outstretched, still in his frockcoat and black beard.*]

1ST MAN [*closing his eyes*]: Agony!

[*The light takes on the silvery tint of a movie screen. The arches and stairs backstage appear tinged with a granular blue light. The Thieves and the Male Nurse disappear in dance time, without turning their backs on the audience. The Students emerge from one of the arches. They carry small flashlights.*]

4TH STUDENT: The audience's attitude has been simply disgusting!

1ST STUDENT: Disgusting! Spectators should never get into the act! When people visit the Aquarium, they don't kill off the sea serpents or the water rats or the leper-colored fish; they

just brush the glass tanks with their eyes and they learn something.

4TH STUDENT: Romeo was a man of thirty and Juliet a boy of fifteen. The public complaint had its point.

2ND STUDENT: The director managed to keep the truth from the audience very charmingly; but the horses and the revolution ruined his plans.

4TH STUDENT: The unforgivable thing is that they should have killed them in cold blood.

1ST STUDENT: And murdered the real Juliet whimpering under the orchestra seats.

4TH STUDENT: Out of sheer curiosity—just to see what they looked like inside!

3RD STUDENT: And what do they have to show for it? A clutter of wounds—complete chaos!

4TH STUDENT: The rerun of the scene was marvelous, though. Because it's certainly a fact that they loved one another to distraction, though I'm not one to condone it. When the nightingale sang, I couldn't keep from crying.

3RD STUDENT: Nor anyone else! But later, they brandished their knives and their truncheons; the letter was stronger than they were. When dogma untangles its meshes, it brazenly tramples the most innocent truths.

5TH STUDENT [*very gaily*]: Look what I've got here—one of Juliet's slippers! The nuns were arranging her shroud when I snatched it.

4TH STUDENT [*gravely*]: Which Juliet?

5TH STUDENT: Which one should it be? Why, the one in the play, the one with the prettiest feet in the world!

4TH STUDENT [*with amazement*]: But didn't you notice that the Juliet in the family vault was a boy in disguise, a dodge of the stage director's, and the real Juliet was gagged under the seats?

5TH STUDENT [*bursting into laughter*]: Well, what do you know! Who cares if she was only a boy in disguise—I thought she

was gorgeous! On the other hand—I'd never have bothered to snatch up the grimy old shoe of that other girl yammering under the seats like an alley-cat!

3RD STUDENT: Yet they killed her for it!

5TH STUDENT: That's why they're out of their minds. Take me, for example: twice every day, when I finish my homework, I climb up the mountain to look after my bulls—a whole herd of them I must fight with and master, moment by moment; I haven't time to ask myself: is it a man or a woman or a boy, now? I just see what there is that appeals to me most.

1ST STUDENT: Wonderful! And what if I wanted to fall madly in love with a crocodile?

5TH STUDENT: You'd fall madly in love with one.

1ST STUDENT: And suppose it was you I wanted to fall madly in love with?

5TH STUDENT [*snatching the slipper*]: You'd fall just the same! You have my permission! I'll carry you over the cliffs on my shoulders!

1ST STUDENT: We'll smash everything to pieces!

5TH STUDENT: Every roof! Every family!

1ST STUDENT: Wherever they babble about love, we'll come in with our football cleats and spatter the mirrors with mud!

5TH STUDENT: We'll burn the big book where the priests read the Mass!

1ST STUDENT: Let's go! Let's begin right away!

5TH STUDENT: I've got four hundreds bulls! I'll tether them all to the rocks with the ropes that my father made! I'll cut them to pieces and start a volcano!

1ST STUDENT: Hurray! Hurray for the boys and the girls and the frogs and the little wood stopples!

PROMPTER [*entering*]: Gentlemen: it's time for the class in descriptive geometry!

1ST MAN: Agony!

[*The stage darkens slowly. The Students turn on their flashlights*

and enter the university.]

PROMPTER [*petulantly*]: Mind you don't damage the window-panes!

5TH STUDENT [*racing through the arches with the 1st Student*]: Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!

1ST MAN: Agony! O lonely man in a dream full of elevators, trains where you move at incredible speeds! Buildings and beaches and corners where you never appear—loneliness! loneliness!

1ST LADY [*on the stairs*]: What? The same stageset again! How perfectly ghastly!

1ST BOY: One of these doors must be the real one!

2ND LADY: Please—don't let go of my hand!

1ST BOY: When it gets lighter we can steer by the skylights.

3RD LADY: I already feel chilly in this dress.

1ST MAN [*in a feeble voice*]: Henry! Henry!

1ST LADY: What was that?

1ST BOY: Keep calm.

[*The stage is in shadow. The flashlight of the 1st Boy lights the dead face of the 1st Man.*]

CURTAIN

E. M. CIORAN: On a Certain Experience of Death

Some men make their way from affirmation to affirmation, their life a series of acceptances. . . . Forever applauding reality or what passes for it in their eyes, they accept the universe and are not ashamed to say so. There is no contradiction they cannot resolve or relegate to the category of "the way things turn out." The more they let themselves be contaminated by philosophy, the more they pride themselves, faced with the entertainments of life and death, on being a *good audience*.

For others, habitual nay-sayers, affirmation demands not only deliberate self-deception, but self-sacrifice as well: how much effort the merest nod to existence can cost! What repudiations must be renounced! They know there is never just one "yes": each assent implies another, perhaps a whole parade—who can afford to take such risks lightly? Yet the security of negation aggravates the nay-sayers too, and hence they conceive the necessity and the interest of affirming something—anything.

It is true that negation is the mind's first freedom, yet a negative habit is fruitful only so long as we exert ourselves to overcome it, adapt it to our needs; once *acquired* it can imprison us—a chain like any other. And slavery for slavery, the servitude of existence is the preferable choice, even at the price of a certain self-splintering: it is a matter of avoiding the contagion of nothingness, the comforts of the abyss. . . .

For centuries theologians have told us that hope is the daughter of patience. And of modesty as well, one might add; the man of pride has no *time* for hope. . . . Unwilling and unable to wait for their culmination, he violates events as much as he violates his own nature; bitter, tainted, when he exhausts his rebellion he abdicates his existence—for him there is no intermediate formula. His lucidity is undeniable, but let us remember that lucidity is a condition peculiar to those who by their incapacity to love are as isolated from others as from themselves.

The assent to death is the greatest one of all. It can be expressed in several ways. . . .

There are among us daylight ghosts, devoured by their absence, for whom life is a long aside. They walk our streets with muffled steps, and look at no one. No anxiety can be discovered in their eyes, no haste in their gestures. For them an outside world has ceased to exist, and they submit to every solitude. Careful to keep their distance, solicitous of their detachment, they inhabit an undeclared universe situated somewhere between the memory of the unimaginable and the imminence of certainty. Their smile suggests a thousand vanquished fears, the grace that triumphs over all things terrible: such beings can pass through matter itself. Have they overtaken their own origins? Discovered in themselves the very sources of light? No defeat, no victory disturbs them. Independent of the sun, they are self-sufficient: illuminated by Death.

We are not in a position to identify the moment when the operations of erosion occur within us at the expense of our human substance. We know only that the result of such operations is a void, into which the idea of our own destruction gradually settles. A vague, faintly outlined idea: as if the void were aware of itself. Then from the furthest reaches of the self, in sonorous transfiguration, may be heard a noise, a sound, a *tonality* which by its very insistence must either paralyze us forever or preserve our life anew. We may find ourselves captives of fear or of nostalgia; lower than death or on its own level. Captives of fear, if this tonality merely perpetuates the void in which it occurs; and of nostalgia, if it converts the void to plenitude. According to our structure, we shall discern in death either a deficit or a surplus of being.

Before affecting our perception of duration—acquired relatively late—the fear of death attacks our sense of dimension, of immediacy—our illusion of what is *solid*: space shrinks, shoots

from our grasp, turns into thin air, becomes entirely transparent. Our fear replaces space, welling up until it obscures the very reality that provoked it—until it substitutes itself for death. All experience is suddenly reduced to an exchange between the self and this fear, which as an autonomous reality isolates us in such unmotivated terrors, such gratuitous shudders that we run the risk of forgetting we are going to . . . die. Yet fear can supplant our real problems only to the extent that we—unwilling either to assimilate or to exhaust it—perpetuate it within ourselves like a temptation and enthrone it at the very heart of our solitude. One step further and we shall become debauchees not of death but of the fear of death. Such is the history of all the fears we have not been able to overcome: no longer subservient to motivation, they grow into independent, tyrannical idols. "We live in fear, and therefore we do not live." Buddha's words may be taken to mean that instead of keeping ourselves at the stage of being where fears opens out onto the world, we make it an end in itself, a closed universe, a substitute for *space*. If fear controls us, it must distort our image of the world. The man who can neither master nor exploit his fear ultimately ceases to be himself, loses his identity, for fear is valuable only if one defends oneself against it; the man who surrenders to it can never recover, but must proceed, in all transactions with himself, from treason to treason until he smothers death itself beneath his fear of it.

The attraction of certain problems derives from their lack of rigor, and hence from the contradictory solutions they provoke: so many more difficulties to entice the amateur of the Insoluble.

In order to "document" myself on the subject of death, a biological treatise is of no more use than the catechism: as far as *I* am concerned, it is a matter of indifference whether I am going to die because of original sin or the dehydration of my cells. Entirely independent of our intellectual system, death, like every individual experience, can be confronted only by knowl-

edge without *information*. Hence many uneducated men have spoken more pertinently of it than this or that metaphysician; once experience has detected the agent of their destruction, such men devote all their thoughts to it, so that death becomes no mere impersonal "problem," but a reality all their own, *their death*.

Yet among all those who, uneducated or not, think continually of death, most do so only because they are terrified by the prospect of their final agony, not realizing that even if they were to live centuries, millennia, the *reasons* for their fear would remain entirely unchanged, agony being merely an accident in the process of our annihilation, a process that is, after all, coextensive with our duration. Life, far from being what Bichat once called an ensemble of functions for resisting death, is rather an ensemble of functions for bearing us toward it. Our substance diminishes with every step, yet it is of this very diminution that all our efforts should tend to make a stimulant, a principle of efficacity. Those who cannot benefit from their possibilities of nonexistence are strangers to themselves: puppets, objects "furnished" with a self, numbed by a neutral time that is neither duration nor eternity. To exist is to profit by our share of unreality, to be quickened by each contact with the void that is within us. To this void the puppet remains insensible, abandons it, permits it to decay, to die out. . . .

A kind of germinative regression, a return to our roots, death destroys our identity only to permit us a surer access to it—a reconstitution; for death has no meaning unless we accord it all the attributes of life.

Although at our first, our primary perceptions of its quality, death presents itself as a dislocation, a loss, it subsequently produces, by revealing the nullity of time and the infinite worth of each separate moment, certain tonic effects: if it offers us only the image of our own inanity, by the same token it converts that inanity into an absolute, inviting us to commit ourselves to

it. And by thus rehabilitating our "mortal" aspect, death institutes itself as a day by day dimension of our life, a triumphal agony.

What is the good of fastening our thoughts upon some tomb or other, staking anything upon our eventual rot? Spiritually degrading, the macabre confronts us with the exhaustion of our glands, the stinking garbage of our dissolution. We can claim to be alive only to the degree that we slight or circumvent the idea of our eventual corpse. Nothing of value results from reflections on the material fact of dying. If I permitted the flesh to dictate its philosophy, to impose its conclusions upon me, I might as well do away with myself before knowing them. For everything the flesh has to teach me annihilates me without recourse: does it not refuse all illusion? Does it not, as the interpreter of our ashes, continually contradict our lies, our fantasies, our hopes? Let us therefore proceed beyond its arguments, and force it to join battle against its own evidence.

To rejuvenate ourselves at the contact of death is a matter of investing it with all our energies, of becoming, like Keats, "half in love with easeful death" or, like Novalis, of making of death the principle that "romanticizes" life. If Novalis was to carry his nostalgia for death to the point of sensuality, it was Kleist who was to derive from it a completely inner "felicity." "*Ein Strudel von nie geahnter Seligkeit hat mich ergriffen . . .*" (A whirlpool of undreamed-of felicity has seized me), he writes, before committing suicide. Neither defeat nor abdication, his death was a rage of happiness, an exemplary and concerted madness, one of the rare successes of despair. Schlegel's remark that Novalis was the first man to experience death "as an artist" seems to me to apply more exactly to Kleist, who was better equipped for death than anyone has ever been. Unequalled, perfect, a masterpiece of tact and taste, his suicide makes all others unnecessary.

A vernal annihilation, culmination rather than chasm, death dizzies us only to raise us all the more readily above our customary selves, with the same privilege as love's, to which it is related in more than one respect: both love and death, applying an explosive pressure upon the framework of our lives, disintegrate us, fortify us, ruin us by the distractions of plenitude. As irreducible as they are inseparable, their elements constitute a fundamental equivocation. If, to a certain point, love destroys us, with what sensations of expansion and pride it does its work! And if death destroys us altogether, what *frissons* does it not employ! Sensations, shudders by which we transcend the *man* within us, and the accidents of the self.

Since both love and death define us only to the degree that we project our appetites and impulses upon them, that we cooperate wholeheartedly with their equivocal nature, they are necessarily beyond our grasp as long as we regard them as exterior realities, accessible to the operations of the intellect. We plunge into love as into death, we do not reflect upon them: we savor them as accomplices, we do not measure them. For that matter, every experience that is not converted into a voluptuous one is a failure. If we had to limit ourselves to our sensations as they were, they would appear intolerable for being too distinct, too dissimilar from our essence. Death would not be the Great Human Experiment that Failed if men knew how to assimilate it to their nature or how to transform it into pleasure. But death remains within them as an experience *apart*, different from what they are.

And it is still another indication of the double reality of death —its equivocal character, the paradox inherent in the manner we experience it—that it presents itself to us as a *limit* and at the same time as a *datum*. We rush toward it, and yet we are already there. Thus even as we are incorporating it within our lives, we cannot keep ourselves from positing it in the future. By an inevitable inconsistency, we interpret death as the future which destroys the present, our present. If fear assisted us in defining

our sense of space, it is death which reveals the true meaning of our temporal dimension, since without death, being in time would mean nothing to us, or, at the most, the same thing as being in eternity. Hence the traditional image of death, despite all our efforts to elude it, obstinately haunts us, an image for which sick men are chiefly responsible. In such matters we agree to recognize their qualifications; a prejudice in their favor automatically accords them a kind of "profundity," although most of them give every evidence of a disconcerting futility. We have all known *operetta incurables.*

More than anyone else the sick man is expected to identify himself with death; yet he does his utmost to detach himself from it, to project death outside himself. Since it is easier for him to run away from it than to confess its presence in himself, he uses every artifice to rid himself of death. He makes a practice, even a doctrine out of his defensive reaction. The ordinary man, in good health, is delighted to imitate him in every detail. And only the ordinary man? The mystics themselves employ subterfuges, practice every form of evasion, flight tactics: for them death is only an obstacle to be surmounted, a barrier which separates them from God, a last step in duration. In this life, they sometimes manage—thanks to ecstasy, that springboard—to leap beyond time: an instantaneous trajectory by which they achieve only "fits" of beatitude. They must disappear for good if they would attain the object of their desires; hence they love death because it permits them to realize these desires, and they hate death because it delays so long in coming. The soul, according to Theresa of Avila, aspires only to its creator, but "it sees at the same time that it is impossible to possess its creator if it does not die; and since it is impossible for the soul to put itself to death, it dies of the desire to die, until it is actually in danger of death." Always this need to make death into an accident or a means, to reduce it to a disappearance instead of regarding it as a presence—always this need to dispossess death. And if religions have made of it only a pretext or a scarecrow

—a weapon of propaganda—it is the duty of the unbelievers to see that justice is done, to re-establish death and restore all its rights.

Each being *is* his sentiment of death. It follows that the experiences of sick men and mystics cannot be discarded as false, although we may question their interpretations of these experiences. We are on ground where no criterion functions, where certitudes swarm, where everything is a certitude, because our truths here coincide with our sensations, our problems with our attitudes. Furthermore, what "truth" can we claim, when at every moment we are engaged in another experience of death? Our "destiny" itself is only the development, the phases of this primordial and yet changing experience, the translation into apparent time of that *secret time* in which the diversity of our ways of dying is elaborated. To explain a destiny, biographers should abandon their usual procedure, should give up examining this apparent time, this readiness of their subject to deteriorate his own essence. The same thing is true for a whole epoch: to know its institutions and its dates is less important than to divine its intimate experience of which these are the signs. Battles, ideologies, heroism, sanctity, barbarism—all so many simulacra of an interior world which alone should solicit our attention. Every culture dies out in its own way, every culture perfects several rules of extinction and imposes them upon its members: even the best among them could not change or evade such rules. A Pascal, a Baudelaire circumscribe death: one reduces it to our search for salvation, the other to our physiological terrors. If death overwhelms man, crushes him, it remains no less, for them both, *within* man. Quite the contrary, the Elizabethans or the German Romantics made of death a cosmic phenomenon, an orgiastic metamorphosis, a vivifying nothingness—ultimately a *force* in which man was to steep himself and with which it was important to maintain direct relations. For the Frenchman, what counts is not death in itself—an evidence of Matter's absentmindedness or merely an impropriety—but our behavior in the

eyes of our fellow-men, the strategy of *adieux*, the countenance which the calculations of our vanity impose upon us—in short, *attitude*; not our quarrel with ourselves, but with others: a spectacle in which it is essential to observe the details and the motives. The whole of French art consists of knowing how to die *in public*. Saint-Simon describes not the agony of Louis XIV, of Monsieur, or of the Regent, but the *scenes* of their agony. The customs of the Court, an awarenesss of its ceremony, its ostentation, have been inherited by a whole people enamored of display and anxious to associate a certain brilliance with the last breath. In this regard Catholicism has been useful to the French: does it not maintain that the way we die is essential to our salvation, that our sins can be redeemed by a "good death"? A questionable notion, but one entirely adapted to a nation's histrionic instinct, and which, in the past more than today, is related to conceptions of honor and dignity, to the style of the *honnête homme*. It was then a question, setting God aside, of saving face in front of an audience, in front of the elegant strollers and gapers and the worldly confessors; not of perishing, but of *officiating*, preserving one's reputation before witnesses and asking extreme unction of them alone. . . . Even the worst libertines died decorously, so much did their respect for opinion prevail over the irreparable, so much did they conform to the usages of an epoch in which to die signified, for man, to renounce solitude and privacy alike, to go on parade one last time, and in which the French were the greatest of all specialists in agony.

It is nevertheless doubtful that by relying on the "historical" aspect of the experience of death we shall manage to penetrate further into its original character, for history is merely an inessential mode of being, the most effective form of our infidelity to ourselves, a metaphysical refusal, a mass of events with which we confront the only event which matters. Everything that aims at affecting man—religions included—is tainted with a crude

sentiment of death. And it is to seek a true, purer sentiment of this kind that the hermits took refuge in the desert, that negation of history which they rightly compared to the angels, since—they maintained—both were unaware of sin and the Fall into the realm of time. The desert, in fact, provides the image of duration translated into coexistence: a motionless flow, a metamorphosis bewitched by space. The solitary retires there less to expand his solitude and enrich his absence than to produce within himself the tonality of death.

In order to hear this tonality we must institute a desert within ourselves. . . . If we succeed, certain harmonies flow through our blood, our veins dilate, our secrets and our resources appear upon the surface of ourselves where desire and disgust, horror and rapture mingle in obscure and luminous festivity. The dawn of death breaks within us: cosmic trance, the bursting of the spheres, a thousand voices! We are death, and everything is death—death seduces us, sweeps us away, carries us aloft, casts us to earth, or hurls us beyond the bounds of space itself. Death, forever intact, unworn by all the ages of our history, makes us accomplices in its apotheosis; we feel its immemorial freshness, and its time unlike any other . . . death's time, which ceaselessly creates and decomposes us. To such a degree does death hold us, immortalize us in agony, that we shall never be able to indulge ourselves in the luxury of dying; and although we possess the very science of destiny, although we are a veritable encyclopedia of fatalities, we nevertheless know nothing, for it is death that knows everything within us.

I often remember how, at the end of my adolescence, enmeshed in mortuary considerations, enslaved by a single obsession, I apprenticed myself to every force that invalidated my existence. My other thoughts no longer interested me: I knew too well *where* they led me, upon what they converged. From the moment I had only one problem, what was the use of concerning myself with *problems*? Ceasing to live in terms of a self,

I gave death enough rope for my own enslavement; in other words, I no longer belonged to myself. My terrors, even my name were borne by death, and by substituting itself for my own eyes, death revealed to me in all things the marks of its sovereignty. In each man I passed I discerned a cadaver, in each odor a rot, in each joy a last grimace. Everywhere I stumbled against future victims of the noose, against their imminent shadows: other men's lives wore no mystery for The One who scrutinized them through my eyes. Was I bewitched? I preferred to think so. From now on what was I to do? The Void was my eucharist: everything within me, everything exterior to me was transubstantiated into a ghost. Irresponsible, at the antipodes of consciousness, I ended up by delivering myself to the anonymity of the elements, to the drunkenness of indivisibility, determined not to re-integrate my being nor to become again a colonist of chaos.

Unable to see in death the positive expression of the void, the agent that awakens the creature from itself, the summons resounding in the ubiquity of drowsiness, I knew nothingness by heart, and I accepted my knowledge. Even now, how could I mistake the autosuggestion that produced the universe? Yet I protest against my own lucidity. I must have Reality at any price. I have feelings only out of cowardice; very well, I wish to be a coward, to impose a "soul" upon myself, to let myself be devoured by a thirst for immediacy, to destroy all my evidence and find myself a world whatever the cost. And if I could not find a world, I would content myself with a shard of being, with the illusion that something exists, whether before my eyes or somewhere else. I would be the conquistador of a continent of lies. To be duped or die: there was no other choice. Like those who have discovered life by the detours of death, I would hurl myself upon the first deception, upon anything that might restore my lost reality.

After the banality of the abyss, what miracles in being! Exist-

ence is the unheard of, *what cannot happen*, a state of exception. And nothing can engage it save our desire to accede to it, to force an entrance, to take it by assault.

To exist is a habit I do not despair of acquiring. I shall imitate the others, the cunning ones who have managed it, the turncoats of lucidity; I shall rifle their secrets, even their hopes, quite happy to snatch with them at the indignities that lead to life. Denial is beyond my strength, or my patience; assent tempts me. Having exhausted my reserves of negation, and perhaps negation itself, why should I not run out into the street shouting at the top of my lungs that I am on the verge of discovering a truth, the only one that is worth anything? But I do not know yet what that truth is; I only know the joy which precedes it, the joy and the madness and the fear.

It is this ignorance—and not fear of ridicule—that robs me of the courage of rousing the world with my news, of observing the world's terror at the spectacle of my happiness, of my definitive assent, my fatal *yes*.

Since we derive our vitality from our store of madness, we have only the certitudes and therapeutics of delirium with which to oppose our dread and our doubt. By dint of unreason, let us become a source, an origin, a starting point—let us multiply by all possible means our *cosmogonic moments*. We actually exist only when we radiate time itself, when suns rise within us and we dispense their light, illuminating the hours. . . . It is then that we share in the volubility of things which are so astonished to have come into being and so impatient to broadcast their surprise in the metaphors of light. Everything swells and dilates to acquire the habit of the unexpected. A generation of miracles: everything converges upon us, for everything radiates from us. But can this really be us—ourselves? Of our own will? Can the mind conceive so much of day, time suddenly made eternal? And what brings to birth within us this quivering space, these roaring equators?

To think we could free ourselves of our penchant for agony, of our oldest evidence, would be to deceive ourselves about our capacity for aberration. In fact, after the favor of a few bits of being, we relapse into panic and disgust, into the temptations of melancholia and the cadaver, into the deficit of being that results from the negative sentiment of death. However serious our fall, it may nevertheless be useful to us if we turn it into a discipline that can induce us to reconquer the privileges of delirium. The hermits of the first centuries of Christianity will serve us again as an example. They will teach us how, in order to raise our psychic level, we must join a permanent combat with ourselves. It is with singular appropriateness that one Father of the Church has called them "athletes of the desert." They were warriors whose state of tension, whose relentless struggles against themselves we can scarcely imagine. There were some who recited up to seven hundred prayers a day; they kept track by dropping a pebble after each one. . . . A mad arithmetic which made me admire them all the more for their matchless pride. They were not weaklings, these obsessed saints at grips with the dearest of all their possessions: *their temptations*. Living only in their behalf, they exacerbated these temptations to have still more to struggle against. Their descriptions of "desire" comprise such violence of tone that they scrape our senses raw and give us shudders no libertine author succeeds in inspiring. They were ingenious at glorifying "the flesh" in reverse. If it fascinated them to such a degree, what merit in having fought against its attractions! They were titans, more frenzied, more perverse than those of mythology; for the latter would never have been able, in their simplicity of mind, to conceive, for the accumulation of energy, all the advantages of self-loathing.

Our unprovoked natural sufferings being far too incomplete, it is up to us to augment, to intensify them, to create others for ourselves—artificial ones. Left to itself, the flesh encloses us within

a narrow horizon. Only if we put it to the torture will it sharpen our perceptions and enlarge our perspectives: the mind is the result of the torments the flesh undergoes or inflicts upon itself. The anchorites knew how to remedy the insufficiency of their ills. . . . After having joined battle with the world, they had to declare war against themselves. What tranquillity for their neighbors! Does our ferocity not derive from the fact that our instincts are all too interested in other people? If we attended more to ourselves and became the center, the object of our own murderous inclinations, the sum of our intolerances would diminish. We shall never be able to estimate the number of horrors which those primitive monkish colonies spared humanity. Had all those hermits remained in the secular world how many excesses would they not have committed! For the greatest good of their time, they had the inspiration to exercise their cruelty upon themselves. If we would moderate our manners, we must learn to turn our claws upon ourselves, to develop the technique of the desert. . . .

Why, you ask, exalt this leprosy, these repulsive exceptions with which ascetic literature has gratified us? We must cling to whatever we have. At the same time that I execrate the monks and their convictions, I cannot help but admire their extravagances, their willful character, their asperity. There must be a secret in so much energy: the secret of religions themselves. And although they are perhaps not worth troubling about, the fact remains that everything that lives, every rudiment of existence, participates in a religious essence. Let us speak plainly: everything which keeps us from self-dissolution, every lie which protects us against our unbreatheable certitudes is religious. When I grant myself a share in eternity, when I conceive of a permanence which includes me, I trample underfoot the evidence of my friable, worthless being, I lie to the others as to myself. Were I to do otherwise, I should disappear within an hour. We last only as long as our fictions. When we see through them, our capital

of lies, our religious holdings collapse. To exist is equivalent to an act of faith, a protest against the truth, an interminable prayer. . . . As soon as they consent to live, the unbeliever and the man of piety are fundamentally the same, since both have made the only decision that defines a *being*. Ideas, doctrines—mere façades, decorative fantasies, accidents. If you have not resolved to kill yourself, there is no difference between you and the others, you belong to the faction of the living, all—no matter what their convictions—great believers. Do you deign to breathe? You are approaching sainthood, you deserve canonization. . . .

Moreover, if you are dissatisfied with yourself, if you want to change your nature, you engage yourself twice over in an act of faith: you desire two lives within one. Which is precisely what our ascetics are attempting when, by making of death a means of not dying, they take pleasure in their vigils, their cries, their nocturnal athleticism. By imitating their excesses, even outstripping them, the day will come, perhaps, when we shall have mistreated our reason as much as they did. "I am guided by whoever is madder than myself"—thus speaks our thirst. Only our flaws, the opacities of our clairvoyance, can save us: were that transparence perfect, it would strip us of the senseless creature which inhabits us, the self to whom we owe the best of our illusions and our conflicts.

Since every form of life betrays and corrupts Life, the man who is genuinely alive assumes a maximum of incompatibilities, works relentlessly at pleasure and pain alike, espousing the nuances of the one as of the other, refusing all *distinct* sensations and every unmingled state. Our inmost aridity results from our allegiance to the rule of the *definite*, from our plea in bar of imprecision, that innate chaos which by renewing our deliriums keeps us from sterility. And it is against this beneficent. factor, against this chaos, that every school of thought, every philosophy reacts. And if we do not succor it with all our solici-

tude, we shall waste our last reserves: those which sustain and stimulate our death within us, preventing it from growing old.

After having made of death an affirmation of life, having converted its abyss into a salutary fiction, having exhausted our arguments against the evidence, we are ambushed by stagnation, depression: it is the revenge of our accumulated bile, of our nature, of this demon of common sense which, allayed for a time, awakens to denounce the ineptitude and the absurdity of our will to blindness. A whole past of merciless vision, of complicity with our ruin, of accustoming ourselves to the venom of truth, and so many years of contemplating our remains in order to extract from them the principle of our knowledge! Yet we must learn to think against our doubts and against our certitudes, against our omniscient humors, we must above all, by creating for ourselves *another* death, one that will be incompatible with our carrion carcasses, consent to the undemonstrable, to the idea that something exists. . . .

Nothingness may well have been more convenient. How difficult it is to *dissolve* oneself in Being!

—Translated by Richard Howard

MIKE McCLURE: Ode to Jackson Pollock

Hand swinging the loops of paint—splashes—drips—
Chic lavender, duende black, blue and red!

Jackson Pollock my sorrow is selfish. I won't meet
you here. I see your crossings of paint!
We are all lost in the cloud of our gestures—

—the smoke we make with our arms. I cry
to my beloved too. We are lost
in lovelessness. Our sorrows
before us. Copy them in air! We
make their postures with our stance.

They grow before us.
The lean black she-wolves on altars of color.
We search our remembrance for memories
of heroic anguish. We put down
our pain as singing testimony.
Gouges, corruptions, wrinkles, held loose

in the net of our feelings and hues—
we crash into their machinery making it
as we believe. I say

we. I—you. You saw the brightness
of pain. Ambition. We give in to the lie
of beauty in the step of creating.
Make lies to live in. I mean you. Held
yourself in animal suffering.
You made your history. Of pain.

Making it real for beauty, for ambition
and power. Invented totems from teacups
and cigarettes. Put it all down

in disbelief—waiting—forcing.

Each gesture painting.—Caught on
to the method of making each motion
your speech, your love, your rack

and found yourself. Heroic—huge—burning
with your feelings. Like making money

makes the body move. Calls you to action
swirling the paint and studying the feeling

caught up in the struggle and leading it.
For the beauty of animal action
and freedom of full reward.
To see it down—and praise—and admiration
to lead, to feel yourself above all others.

NO MATTER WHAT—IT'S THERE! NO ONE

can remove it. Done in full power.
Liberty and Jackson Pollock the creator.
The mind is given credit.

You strangled
the lean wolf beloved to yourself—
Guardians of the secret
—and found yourself the secret
spread in clouds of color

burning yourself and falling like rain

transmuted into grace and glory, free
of innocence

containing all, pressing experience
through yourself onto the canvas.
Pollock I know you are there! Pollock
do you hear me?!! Spoke to himself
beloved. As I speak to myself
to Pollock into the air. And fall short

of the body of the beloved hovering

always before him. Her face
not a fact, memory or experience
but there in the air

destroying confidence.
The enormous figure of her mystery

always there in trappings of reason.

Worked at his sureness. Demanding
Her place beside him. Called

from the whirls of paint, asked for
a face and shoulders to stand naked
before him to make a star.

He pulling the torn parts of her body
together
to make a perfect figure—1951.
Assembled the lovely shape of chaos.
Seeing it bare and hideous, new
to the old eye. Stark
black and white. The perfect figure
lying in it peering from it.
And he gave her what limbs and lovely face
he could
from the squares, angles, loops, splashes, broken shapes
he saw of all with bare eye and body.

JOHN RECHY: El Paso del Norte

This is about El Paso (and Juarez: the Southwest), which so long was just a hometown to me and which now is different from any other section in America.

El Paso and Juarez are in the middle of the Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico white, white desert surrounded by that range of mountains jutting unevenly along the border. At sundown the fat sun squats on the horizon like a Mexican lady grandly on her frontporch. Appropriately.

Because only geographically the Rio Grande, which in the Southwest is a river only part of the time and usually just a strait of sand along the banks of which sick spiders weave their webs, divides the United States from Mexico. Only geographically. The Mexican people of El Paso, more than half the population—and practically all of Smeltertown, Canutillo, Ysleta—are all and always and completely Mexican, and will be. They speak only Spanish to each other and when they say the Capital they mean Mexico DF.

Oh, but, once it was not so. When the War came, Christ, the Mexicans were American as hell. The youngmen went to war wearing everything that was authorized, sometimes even more. Huge stars appeared on the southside tenement and government-project windows. OUR SON IS SERVING AMERICA. My mother wore my brother's Purple Heart to Mass and held it up when the Priest gave his blessing.

Outside El Paso City, giant machines dig into the mountains for ores (Smeltertown), and beyond that (where I used to climb poetic as hell) is a tall beautiful mountain.

The Mountain of Cristo Rey.

Huge processions go up this holy mountain. The people of El Paso, Ysleta, Canutillo, of Smeltertown and of Juarez march up climbing for hours, chanting prayers. The procession starts downtown in El Paso, outside the churches, and the groups join

each other in the streets, kneeling at intervals on inspiration, carrying placards of the Virgin, Saints in colors. Small bands jazz solemnly, crying dissonant sounds. The shawled ladies of the Order of Saint Something grip rosaries and mumble and feel—as rightly so as anyone in the world—Holy. The priests in bright drag lead them up. They carry sadfaced saints. The small bands stay behind at the foot of the mountain, the musicians wiping the sweat off their dark faces, and drinking cool limonada and mingling with the sellers of coca-cola, religious medals. The procession winds up the mountain slowly past the crude weatherbeaten stations of the cross along the path. And at the top, finally—where they say Mass, the people kneeling on the rocks in the blazing white sun—is The Statue.

It is a primitive Christ.

Fifty-feet tall. And it looks like a Mexican peasant. Mr. Soler made it. I think he was a kind of semi-atheist who didnt believe in God but believed in the Virgin Mary.

But the poor Mexican Christ, what it has to look down on —the line of desperate ants, as the Magazine (I think it was *Time,* or if it wasnt they would have) called it, of mustached, strawhatted men, braceros invading America.

Because the Rio Grande, no matter what you think, is usually dry, as I said, just sand and scrawny spiders and fingery indentations where water should be or was. Sometimes it is very full, though, and beautiful, and then the Rio Grande is like a dirty young black animal full of life rushing along the sand, swallowing the bushy dry banks. And I would walk along its bank, to the mountains. But usually it is so dry that the wetbacks can enter Sacred Country by merely walking across the River.

On their way to Georgia?

Well, Ive heard that from I dont know how many people. They say, for some strange reason, that Georgia is a kind of heaven where all good spiks go—some crossing into the country illegally, others standing at the Santa Fe Bridge lined up all rags and cloth bags and wooden and cardboard boxes and holy

amulets, whiskers, waiting to be inspected by the Customs-gods. The Magazine also said, well, wasn't it natural, those wetbacks wanting to come into America?—Christ, they heard about sweet-tasting toothpaste. It really said that. And if sweet-tasting American toothpaste aint enough to make a man face the Border Patrol (as Bad as L.A. fuzz) and the excellent labor conditions in progressive Georgia, well, man, what is? The Magazine said it was sad, all those displaced wetbacks, but all that happened though was that they were sent back, but they tried to come across again and again and again.

(I remember a dead bracero near the bank of the Rio Grande, face down drowned in the shallow water, the water around him red, red, red. Officially he had drowned and was found, of course, by the Border Patrol. And his wife will go on thinking forever he made it with a beautiful blonde Georgia woman—loaded with toothpaste—and so, therefore, never came back to her and the even-dozen kids.)

Which brings me to this—

The hatred in much of Texas for Mexicans. It's fierce. (They used to yell, Mexicangreaser, Mexicangreaser, when I went to Lamar Grammar School, and I thought, well, yes, my mother did do an awful lot of frying but we never put any grease on our hair, and so it bothered me—if God was Mexican, as my mother said, why did He allow this?) Many of them really hate us pathologically, like they hate the Negroes, say, in Arkansas. Here, it's the bragging, blustering bony-framed Texan rangers/farmers/ranchers with the Cadillacs and the attitude of Me-and-god on My ranch. It has nothing to do with the Alamo any more. It's just the full-scale really huge (consistent with everything Big in Texas—and Alaska wont change anything) Texan inferiority complex. Dig: the Texas rancher strutting across San Jacinto Plaza, all bones and legs, getting kicks from sitting, later, booted-feet propped getting a shine from the barefoot spik kid, tipping him 50 cents—not just sitting like you and I would get a shine but sitting Grandly, and strutting across the

Border owning the streets, I hope he gets rolled. They dont really dislike Mexicans in Texas if theyre maids and laborers.

So the Mexicans live concentrated on the Southside of El Paso largely, crowded into tenements, with the walls outside plastered with old Vote-for signs from years back and advertisements of Mexican movies at the Colon—the torn clothes just laundered waving on rickety balconies along Paisano Drive held up God knows how. Or if not, in the Government projects, which are clean tenements—a section for the Mexicans, a section for the Negroes. Politely. Row after row of identical box-houses speckled with dozens and dozens of children.

So this, the Southside, is of course the area of the Mean gangs. The ones on the other side are not as dangerous, of course, because they are mostly Blond and mostly normal Anglo-American kiddies growing up naturally and what can you expect? Like the ones from Kern Place—all pretty clean houses at the foot of Mount Franklin—and if those kiddies carry switchblade knives, at least they keep them clean, and when they wear boots, they are Cowboy Boots.

The southside gangs—that's a different thing. Theyre black-haired. And tense. Mean and bad, with Conflict seething. El Paso's southside (the Second Ward) gave birth to the internationally famous Pachucos. (Paso—Pacho.) They used to call them boogies, marijuanos, the zoot-suits—and the baggy pants with the pegged ankles were boogiepants, and, man, those tigers walked cool, long graceful bad strides, rhythmic as hell, hands deep into pockets, shoulders hunched. Much heart. They really did wear and still sometimes do those hats that Al Capp draws —and the chains, too, from the belt to the pocket in a long loop.

And sitting talking Mexican jive, *mano,* under the El Paso streetlamps along Hill and Magoffin and Seventh, around Bowie High School and next to the Palace Theater digging Presley and Chuck Berry and Fats Domino, outside the dingy 40-watt-bulb-lighted Southside grocery stores, avoiding *la jura,* the

neo-Pachucos with dreamy junk eyes and their chicks in tight skirts and giant pompadours and revealing 1940-style sweaters hang in the steamy El Paso nights, hunched, mean and bad, plotting protest, unconscious of, though they carry it, the burden of the world, and additionally, the burden of Big Texas.

Well, look. In East Texas. In Balmorhea, say. In Balmorhea, with its giant outdoor swimming pool (where that summer the two blond tigers and I went swimming, climbed over the wall and into the rancid-looking night water) there were signs in the two-bit restaurant, in Balmorhea-town then, that said WE DO NOT SERVE MEXICANS, NIGGERS OR DOGS. That night we went to the hick movie, and the man taking the tickets said, You boys be sure and sit on the right side, the left is for spiks. So I said I was on the wrong side and walked out. Later at Kit's aunt's ranch, the aunt waited until the Mexican servant walked out and then said, miserably, Ah jaist caint even eat when they are around. And because earlier had made me feel suddenly a Crusader and it was easy now, I walked out of the diningroom and said well then I shouldnt be here to louse up your dinner, lady.

And you never know it—to look at that magnificent Texas sky.

And something quite something else . . .

Once upon a time in El Paso there was a band of fairies—yes, really, in El Paso, Texas—and this city became a crossroads between the hot Eastcoast and the cool Westcoast (fuzz-wise, vice-wise) or the hot Westcoast and the cool Eastcoast, depending on where oh where the birls had got Caught Jay-Walking. And soon San Jacinto Plaza (or Alligator Plaza—sleepy crocodiles in a round pond, so tired and sleepy they dont even wake up when little kids grab them by their tails and flip them into the water) was a fairy paradise, rebel. The birls would camp there in that little park—the queens with pinched-in waists, lisps, painted eyes, digging the soldiers from Fort

Bliss, proclaiming Too Much. Alas, they went the way of all fairies. The Inevitable Clean-Up came, and the fuzz swooped on them jealously and to jail they went, all fluttering eyelashes justifying gay mother love.

Now it is not the same passing through the park not seeing the queens, not hearing their delighted squeals of approbation floating into the clean summer Texas air. Not the same at all.

At Christmas is when Mexican El Paso is magnificent. I dont mean the jazz at San Jacinto Plaza (trees and lights and Christmas carols and Santa Claus). I mean the Southside Christmas. A lot of them—most of them, in fact—put up trees, of course, but many of them put up nacimientos. My father used to start putting ours up almost a month before Christmas when we lived on Wyoming Street. It's a large boxlike thing—ours was, anyway—about six-feet wide, six-feet tall, eight-feet deep, like a room minus the front wall (the minus faces the windows, which are cleaned to sparkle), and inside is a Christmas scene. Ours had the manger and the Virgin of course and St Joseph, and angels hanging from strings floating on angelhair clouds. To the sides of the manger were modern-looking California miniature houses, with real lights in them—some had swimming pools. And stone mountains. On one was the Devil, red, with a wired neck so that the slightest movement made it twitch, drinking out of a bottle. Christ was coming, and naturally the Devil would be feeling low. My father painted an elaborate Texas-like sky behind the manger, with clouds, giant moon, the works—lights all over, and he enclosed the boxlike nacimiento with Christmas-tree branches, and then, one year, he had a real lake—that is, real water which we changed daily. The wisemen on their way. Christmas lights, bulbs, on top. He moved the wise men each night, closer to the manger. The Christchild wasnt there yet—He wasnt born. Then on Christmas Eve everyone came over. My mother led the rosary. We all knelt. Someone had been chosen to be the padrino—the godfather—of the Christchild to be born that night. He carried the Child in his

hands, everyone kissed it ("adored" it), and then finally He was put into the manger, in the hay. We prayed some more. *Dios te salve, Maria, llena eres de Gracia.* . . . At the stroke of midnight, the Child was born. Then there was a party—tamales, buñuelos, liquor.

Most Mexicans are Catholic, of course. My friend Sherman is an intelligent Catholic from Evanston and he said it was bad when Catholics substitute, like the Mexican people he loves so much (Sherman in Chihuahua City that time trying so hard to look like a Mexican peasant, with Indian sandals and muslin shirt—him, six-feet-two and Scandinavian curly blond!—and people staring at him thinking he came probably from the American moon), the image of the Virgin for that of Christ. He loves the Virgin himself, a lot, but still he says Christianity should mean Christ. (He says he would rather see the Mexicans worship the Sun, incidentally, like their Indian ancestors, than become protestants, because for a while the Baptists especially had a full-scale campaign going, and pretty soon, on the doors of the broken-down southside houses they tried to invade with irresistible chocolate American candy and bright colors for the shoeless children living in cardboard houses along the Border appeared signs THIS IS A CHRISTIAN HOME PROTESTANT PROPAGANDA WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.)

But that's not what I started to say, which was this—

The Patron of Mexico is the Virgin of Guadalupe. The story says She appeared to Juan Diego, one day, and in order to make the incredulous know that he had indeed seen Her, She stamped Herself on his shawl, and that is the one you see in Mexican churches, all stars and blue robe. Oh, how tenderly they believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe (*even the Priests*!), and how they love Her, the Mother of all Mexico.

How they Respect mothers because of it. Mothers are a Grand Mexican thing. They belong sacredly in Mexico and the Mexican Southwest.

Dig: a serious Mexican movie. The favorite theme. The son

goes away. The little Old Mexican Mother stands at the dingy door with her black shawl sheltering her from the drizzling rain. Christ. The son goes away, and forgets about her. He becomes a Great Matador, lured by women like Maria Bonita before the President's wife—and this is only gossip—chased her out. Wow! The Little Mother in the Black Shawl wanders over Mexico, working for harsh people—like sewing in a factory where, she's so old, poor thing, she cant keep up with the heftier ladies. She comes at last into a very rich home in Mexico City. Of course. It is her son's home. But he doesnt recognize her, and she decides not to tell him who she is so he wont be ashamed of her. She'll just be satisfied to be near him. He is gruff. "Old woman, look how much dust has accumulated on this my favorite table." "Yes, sir." She wipes it. He is cruel, yells at her despite the pitiful black shawl. She takes it, and this is true. Mexican mothers and wives do take It—not Americans, and this is what grips a Mexican audience. Loyalty. One day the Big Corrida comes on. The wife is digging it on television (she cant bear to go it live). The matador is gored. The shawled Mother screams, MI HIJO!!!! The wife knows now, and being Mexican herself and on the way to becoming a Mexican Mother, she hugs the Old Lady. They run out, get a cab, go to the bullring. There he is. Unconscious. Dying. The beautifully dressed wife pulls the shawl off the little old Mother and proclaims to the dying matador, "Die if God wills it—but not without knowing that—This—Is—Your—Mother!!!!" Everyone is crying, the unnatural son repents (as he must), and all three live happily ever after.

This is real. Mexicans really love Mothers. Americans dont. I dont have a single American acquaintance whose mother faints everytime he comes home and again when he leaves. Mine does. The Mexican mother-love has nothing to do with sex, either. You can imagine an American wanting to make it with his mother. She is slick. She looks almost as young and bad as he does. But can you imagine making it with your

mother if she wears a Black Shawl, and, even if she doesnt, if she acts all the time like she is wearing One?

How does it follow, then, that a little Mexican kid (as I will tell you later) can say to an ugly big Texan tourist, HEY MEESTER YOU WANT MY MOTHER SHE IS CHERRY? I'll explain it by describing something else. Someone related to me lived with a woman for 25 years. Suddenly they decided to make it permanent. Get married. After 25 years, remember. Not silently, you believe it. They had a real Mexican bash, with caterers and mariachies, and the bride's 26-year-old daughter (from another engagement) crying all over the place—and the bride dressed in WHITE, and the Priest that married them and had been invited over saying well, God was certainly smiling in pleasure to see His laws being obeyed.

There's a Mexican Saint you make bets with. San Calletano, patron of gamblers . . .

Mexican religion is a very real thing, not lukewarm at all, nor forbidding and awesome. Mexican Catholics (and this, again, includes the Priests) believe in a God with two hands, two feet, eyes—the works. The Devil has horns, a tail, and he is most certainly red. Each church in the Mexican sections of the Southwest, and all of them in Juarez have Real patron saints, who guard them. On their days, they have kermesses—this is like a fair. On the really big days (for example, in May, the month of the Virgin Mary), the Indians (who are Catholics although their religion is still magnificently pagan, having room in it for Mayan, Aztec, other legends—witchcraft—right along with the story of Jesus) come into the City. The matachines (they used to scare me, like the beggars I will tell you about later) are Indians dressed in all kinds of feathers, painted all over, making dance marathons, dancing for hours. Some Indians—I think the Tarahumaras—run all the way from somewhere like Chihuahua City to Juarez, offering I suppose that amount of exerted energy to the Virgin. In religious frenzy, they burn an effigy of Satan—a kind of man-shaped catherine

wheel. They light him up, and the bastard burns shooting fire straight from hell. The people yell up a storm, and the Politicians and Gangsters shoot real bullets into the air in this tribute to the Virgin Mary.

Juarez!

Time and time they try to clean it up. But Juarez is Dirty. And will be dirty long after we are gone.

The same close acquaintance I mentioned before is a gangster in Juarez. They really have bigtimers there, like they used to have in Chicago. You can always tell them by the way they wear Western-type gabardine clothes *a-la-mejicana,* and hand-tailored boots (NOT square cowboy-type), and always, always, but ALWAYS, sun-glasses, especially blue ones. My relation in question belongs to a very respected Mexican class—the gamblers, the gangsters, the pimps, the politicians.

At night, Juarez is all lights and neon signs. Clip-joints. Cab-drivers pouncing on tourists. This is your chance to find out If It Is True What They Say About Oriental Girls (i.e., does their Snatch slant?). Find out, they say, from Chinese Movie Stars. Get dirty postcards made to order. Peepshows. Men, women, dogs—sometimes a horse. And the little urchin barefoot Mexican boys saying, HEY MEESTER and they really do say meester YOU WANT MY MOTHER SHE IS CHERRY. Bars and cabarets. Exotic entertainment. The Chinese Palace. The Stork. The 1-2-3. Girls, girls, girls. The thickly painted prostitutes stand in a line openly soliciting at bars—big fat red lips, narrow-waved long hair falling over great big dangling earrings.

At the Taxco they had this magnificent woman who looked like Mopsy of the cartoon. A genius. To wit: She dyed her hair *bright green.* And her costume was a large green powder-puff, same shade, right on her snatch. That started one of the many clean-ups. So she had to get decent. She added two tiny green powderpuffs, the color of her dyed hair, to her nipples. . . .

In the early clear-blue Texas-Mexico mornings, the whores,

the pimps, the politicians, the gangsters, the gamblers—that is, the upper classes—are all asleep, the rich ones in their grand mosaic houses (sometimes the roof leaks, but, oh, rebel, the luxury of them pads!). And then another group of people takes over the City—the vendors and the invalids and the beggars.

Youve never seen anything like it—never so many people lacking legs, eyes, hands—the legless rushing around in their homemade wagons on skate wheels, with padded cloth knuckles rolling themselves along. At almost every corner, outside the market, along the park in front of the Church of Guadalupe, you see the gaunt women sitting draped in black shawls. You cant tell if there is anything wrong with their eyes or if they are just rolling them in a kind of poverty-frenzy. They used to frighten the hell out of me, they reminded me of Death when I used to think of Death as ugly. Around these women there are two or three or more kids, all filthy, mud caking on their legs, and inevitably a baby suckling their withered breasts, where Im sure nothing is coming. *Madre de Misericordia,* they chant, *virjen sagrada de los dolores, una caridad.* And kids without legs, hobbling along on tree branches. And so much damned ugly poverty.

The market is all sounds and colors—and of course odors and smoke. All along the streets. *Aqui, marchante,* says a seller luring the buyer from a competitor. Prices fall fantastically, and a kind of haywire auction in which the buyer has no part goes on fiercely. Stands of cheap jewelry like broken kaleidoscopes, medallions of Christ and the Virgin, Indian masks, limeade and orchata (drunk by everyone out of the same two glasses), leather whips, hasaderos (like cheese), tacos in railroadcar-like restaurants outside, tortillas pounded by the squatting women. And flies all around, always, lord, yes, always flies—especially around the red watermelon slices or pineapple slices where the little girl stands absently with a stick with thin strips of paper tied to it to shoo the flies unsuccessfully to the next stand and fans herself instead. And Mexican toys (always with strings

to be pulled and someone kicks someone, or a chicken bites a woman, or a rock falls on an Indian). Paper flowers—different colors, from one stalk, covered with wax to make them look velvety—skirts with gaudy pictures of the Virgin of Guadalupe, of Catholic churches in the City. Boots (purple, yellow, green) —and everyone calling at the same time. Hot "rubies" for a dollar—"emeralds," "diamonds" for pennies. And the flies buzzing.

Outside, in the streets, especially outside the market, the kids in empty parking lots offer to watch tourists' and American shoppers' cars while theyre gone—or offer to carry groceries to the streetcar (sometimes running away with them to hungry brothers and sisters—I hope), or offer to show you the City, or take you to a whorehouse.

I forget exactly on what day it is—the 16th of September or the 5th of May—both are important dates in Mexican history, like the 4th of July—the population of the Mexican cities gathers outside the City Hall, the Courthouse, etc., waiting for the President, the Governor, or the Mayor, depending, to give *El Grito*—The Yell. At midnight, it comes. VIVA MEXICO! And they echo, QUE VIVA!!!!

And cockfights!

And witches—lots of them.

They hold a position in the Mexican Southwest almost as respected as that of the priests. There's a kind of hierarchy among them, headed by Don Ben (the Pope of El Paso's witches). A problem too big for an ordinary witch is referred finally to Don Ben, a root-twisted old, old man. (He wont die—he'll shrink.) I remember when I was a kid, an *espiritu maligno* kept bugging us, misplacing my father's glasses. We ended up going to Don Ben. He fell into a dramatic trance, and when he woke, he said, My *tata Dios* (daddy God) is so busy right now He suggests we call Him later. We called later, and *tata Dios* said to leave the *espiritu* alone and it would go away.

My second-aunt ("she of the blue hair and the deer eyes—

ahhh!"—Don Ben's description of her) has had a picture of her husband, inverted in a glass of strange liquid, behind her bedroom door, for years. About 40 years ago, he left her—and this will bring him back some day.

And why should devout Mexican Catholics (as they are) consult witches (as they do)? For the same reason that a man with a sick ear goes to an ear specialist. . . .

And bullfights.

But they dont get the best bullfighters at the Juarez arena, although sometimes they do. The real sight—when the bullfight aint good—are the Americans in huge Mexican hats being so Mexican, and the inevitable cluster of Mexicans around them, the fawning ones glorifying the grand American—these are the sick ones—and then the opportunists, hoping the money will rub off and willing to see to it that it does.

At dawn, on a lady's birthday—even now and in El Paso—five or six men gather outside her window, singing and playing their guitars. The sun is about to come out. They sing softly,

Estas son las mañanitas
Que cantava el Rey David.
A las muchachas bonitas
Se las contava el asi. . . .

Now the lady comes coyly to the window, standing there until they have finished the soft dawn singing. Now all the neighbors' windows are up and everyone is listening. (No one thinks of calling the police.) Then the lady invites the serenaders inside, and they all have early-morning coffee, *pan de dulce, menudo.* Then the sun is up in the sky.

The Southwest sky. Beautiful and horrifying. And therefore Wonderful.

Because in all the blunder and bluster of Texas about the wrong things, one thing is really so. The sky.

When it is beautiful it is depthless blue. The sky in other places is like an inverted cup, this shade of blue or gray or black or another shade, with limits, like a painted room. Not in the Southwest. The sky is really millions and millions of miles deep of blue—and in summer, clear magic electric blue.

(How many stars are there in the sky? was our favorite six-year-old children riddle. The answer: *cincuenta.* Which means fifty, but also: countless. And it's true, so true.)

Before the summer storms, the clouds mass and roll twisting in the sky clashing fiercely, sweeping grandly across the sky. Then giant mushrooms explode. The sky groans, opens, it pours rain.

But before the windstorms, everything is calm, and then a strange ominous mass of gray gathers in the horizon. Then swiftly, in a moment it seems, blowing with the wind, the steel clouds cover the sky, and youre locked down here, so lonesome suddenly youre cold. The wind comes. The tumbleweeds rush with it.

And always there's the fearful wailing.

"While the Beat Generation has its bible of the *Evergreen Review,* millions of the Unbeat Generation have the Bible."—Los Angeles *Mirror-News*

GANGADHAR GADGIL: The Coin

There was a bit of empty space between the garage and the wall of the compound. The roof of the garage jutted out over the space and protected it from sun and rain, and at one end lay a few boards and other junk belonging to the owner of the garage. The empty space was thus almost a room with three walls. Such neat natural shelters don't remain unused in a crowded city like Bombay. The man who washed and cleaned the cars in the garage had appropriated it: he had hung a curtain of sacking across the fourth side of the empty space. Thus he had a fine little room for himself where he lived like a prince.

On the other side of the boards and junk there was another, triangular, strip of empty space. A pipal tree was tenaciously struggling to grow there, but enough room remained for a boy to sleep in. Shidoo slept there on a sack, his legs pulled up, and using his arms as a pillow. He was a boy of about twelve or thirteen. Little four-year-old Shreepat did not have even that much shelter. He slept a couple of yards away on the bare ground under the roof of the sky.

Shidoo woke up when the morning sun hit his face. He lay on his stomach for a while, warming his sore buttocks in the sun. Then he sat up. He dug his fingers into his dirty untrimmed hair, scratched his head, and swore at nobody in particular.

Shreepat made a few restless movements. He turned over and lay on his back, stretched his arms and legs and took a deep breath, then he opened his eyes and muttered, "Mamoo."

Shidoo noticed his movements and threw a little stone at him. It hit Shreepat smack on the head.

"Don't do that, Mamoo. Don't, please," whined Shreepat with tears in his eyes.

Shidoo grinned.

"Go away, you pimp," he cried and threw another pebble at Shreepat. It hit him sharply on the head.

"No please, Mamoo. It hurts. No please."

Shidoo laughed and lay down on the sacking. Shreepat eyed him timidly and then inched his way until he nestled close to Shidoo. The gravel he had slept on had left aching marks on his cheek. He rubbed it delicately on Shidoo's arm and murmured, "O Mamoo! Mamoo! Dear Mamoo."

He wanted fondly to ask Shidoo for something. Maybe his top. Not that Shreepat really wanted it, he just wanted to be coddled. But he was afraid to ask for anything. Instead he said admiringly, "Mamoo! How bravely you jumped on the streetcar yesterday. That was real smart."

Shidoo was pleased. He said, "You idiot! You pimp! You'll never be able to do that. And you'll only break a leg if you try it."

"Oh no! I'll jump on the streetcar too. Just like you did," said Shreepat, nestling close to Shidoo. He rubbed his sore cheek on Shidoo's arm again.

"Nonsense."

"I will do it. I certainly will," protested Shreepat, nestling even closer to Shidoo.

"Get away, you mongrel! Get away, you pimp! Get away," cried Shidoo and rapped him sharply on the head.

Shreepat trotted away, rubbing his head. He wiped his tears and turned his back to Shidoo. He was hurt and angry, and he hoped Shidoo would come over and pat him affectionately on the cheek. He knew this would never happen, yet he hoped. The fond expectation was like a feather touching his cheek.

Vague memories crossed his mind like shadows on a wall. The soft pleasant feel of a sari protectively covering his head. A hand mussing his hair and then delicately pinching his ear. A juicy affectionate slap across the buttocks.

He had experienced all this once. Or had he? Since he could remember, he had always roamed and begged on the streets of Bombay, weeping when he had nothing to eat, otherwise romping and fighting with the roaming hordes of vagrant children.

Of them all, he had taken a liking to Shidoo, possibly because he could hold his own in a fight. He had attached himself to Shidoo—adopted him as *mamoo*, as his maternal uncle. He liked to follow him around.

Foolishly he waited with his back turned to Shidoo, hoping that he would come and make up with him. He had his pride. But soon his hope faded and his pride crumbled. He was afraid. He turned round to look for Shidoo.

Shidoo was not there. Shreepat, in a panic, ran looking and calling, "Mamoo, where are you? Mamoo!"

When Shreepat saw Shidoo peeping from behind a tree, a smile spilled across his face. But Shidoo ran out into the street and disappeared again. Shreepat decided not to be taken in this time. He just sat down, not caring about Shidoo at all. But soon he got scared. Had mamoo really gone away? He got up and looked for him, expecting all the while that he would pop out from some hiding place.

But he didn't and Shreepat felt lost and miserable; he didn't know what to do with himself. He walked along the street looking for his mamoo till he could no longer hold back his tears. His lips quivered as he wept in the pit of his stomach. Yet he walked on looking for mamoo. A kindly man gave him an anna and told him to buy something to eat. Shreepat was too disconsolate to be pleased. He just put the anna in his pocket and walked on. He found a piece of bread in the street which he picked up out of habit, wiped on his sleeve, and walked on.

When he had lost all hope he sank onto a step and cried while he nibbled at the piece of bread. When he remembered that he should keep some of the bread for mamoo, he tore off half of it and stuffed it in his pocket. Then he started to cry again.

The owner of a cheap restaurant saw him and cried, "You boy! Why are you crying like that? Come over here. Dattya, pour some tea in the coconut shell for the boy."

Shreepat walked over to the little restaurant. He sat on the

step and sipped the tea. It pleasantly burnt his chest and dripped warm into the pit of his stomach. He stopped crying and stole a look at the fat owner of the restaurant. When their eyes met, he quickly looked down into the coconut shell at the tea and smiled shyly.

The restaurant owner kept looking at him; he said gruffly, "Now look here. Come back tonight, when it's time to close the restaurant. Maybe I can give you some stale bread."

Shreepat nodded, still looking into the coconut shell. When the restaurant owner left him, he started licking the shell. It now felt warm and soothing in his stomach. That fat man is kind of nice, he thought. Maybe he will let me sit in a corner near the door of the restaurant. I will sit there dangling my legs, and nobody will shoo me away, and I won't care about mamoo. Why should I, if he doesn't care about me.

But when he remembered mamoo, his grief returned, more vivid and intense. He wanted to be with mamoo and do all the exciting things he did: running after taxicabs, polishing shoes, flying kites.

No. He did not like the owner of the restaurant at all. He got up and walked out into the street. Then he wandered along until he saw mamoo running after a taxicab.

"Mamoo, mamoo," he cried and ran blindly after him, jostling and pushing people and making the cars screech. He caught up with Shidoo and hung onto his arm.

Shidoo had hailed the taxicab for a sahib. The sahib got into the cab and Shidoo saluted him. Shreepat did likewise. The sahib smiled and gave Shidoo a couple of annas, he gave Shreepat an anna too. The cab drove off in a thin burst of smoke.

When it was gone, Shidoo snatched the anna from Shreepat's fist and cried, "I do the running and you take the money, do you? That's why you follow me around like this. You dirty sneak, you . . ."

"Don't be cross, mamoo. Please don't," Shreepat pleaded.

He did not cry, for he was afraid that would annoy Shidoo even more.

But Shidoo just ignored him and walked off towards a cheap restaurant. He had earned three annas and he felt like eating some bread with a cup of tea. He turned round and growled at Shreepat, who was following him, "You better wait outside, you skunk. I don't want you to eat at my expense. It's my money, isn't it?"

Shreepat waited outside. Again and again, he peeped in to watch Shidoo eating. His eyes followed the movements of Shidoo's hand from the plate to his mouth. When Shidoo noticed him he felt queer in the pit of his stomach.

"Come in, you pimp. Come on in," he growled.

Shreepat ran in with a smile spilled all over his face. He sat importantly on a chair. Shidoo bought him an anna's worth of crusty biscuits and growled, "There. Eat, you skunk. You do nothing but sponge on me."

The scolding did not bother Shreepat. He sat on the chair, pleasantly dangling his legs and munching the crusty biscuits. After a while, he asked shyly, "Mamoo! Can I dip my biscuit in your tea? Eh?"

Shidoo thought it over and then he growled, "Well! All right. But dip it just a tiny bit, you skunk. Otherwise there'll be no tea left for me."

Shreepat dipped his biscuit in the tea and sucked at it noisily. Noticing that Shidoo was eying him hopefully, he impulsively held out the biscuit and said, "Take it. Go ahead. Take it."

Shidoo was embarrassed and said gruffly, "No. I don't want it."

"Of course you do. Come on. Take a bite. Please," cried Shreepat and almost pushed the biscuit into Shidoo's mouth. Shidoo shyly took a bite.

Shreepat looked to make sure it was not too big a bite. Then he giggled. They both giggled.

When they were out in the street again, Shidoo said, "You pimp! You ate the biscuits all right. But now I have no money left to buy bidis. What will I smoke now? Shall I smoke your father's bones?"

He said this with mixed feelings of irritation and fondness. Then he began to look for cigarette butts in the street. That reminded Shreepat of the anna in his pocket. He thrust his hand into the pocket, clutched the anna in his fist, and held it out.

"Take this anna. Buy bidis for you and buy some roasted grams for me," he said with a triumphant smile.

Shidoo snatched the anna and bought half an anna worth of bidis for himself. He inhaled the smoke greedily. Shreepat watched Shidoo's face beaming with satisfaction and then said impatiently, "Aren't you going to buy roasted grams for me?"

Shidoo was annoyed. He growled, "You pimp. Now you're showing off because you gave me the anna. What about the anna I spent on you? You can howl and scream as much as you like. Why, you can even go to the police and complain against me. But you're just not going to get that half anna."

"Give me the grams. Give me," Shreepat almost shrieked. He hit Shidoo wildly with his little fists.

Shidoo got mad and gave him a stinging slap across the cheek. A shopkeeper saw this. He rushed out and caught Shidoo by the ear.

"You rascal. Give that boy his money. You think you can get away with it just because he's a little boy, do you? Come on, now. Give that boy his money," he shouted and rapped Shidoo on the head. Shidoo flung the half anna at Shreepat and, freeing himself from the man's grasp, he ran away. Then, from a safe distance, he lustily cursed the shopkeeper and Shreepat.

Shreepat calmly picked up the coin and bought himself some roasted grams. Sitting on a step he ate the grams one by one. He dangled his legs and sang. He no longer cared about mamoo.

Why should he? He giggled when he remembered how the shopkeeper had twisted mamoo's ear. He saw a little boy in neat clothes walking along the street. Shreepat put out his leg and tripped him. When the boy started to cry, he rapped him on the head and ran away. He was having a lot of fun. He did not care about anybody. Why should he?

But after a while he had a queer uneasy feeling. He was scared. His eyes started looking for Shidoo and his legs took him to places where Shidoo was usually to be found.

At last he found Shidoo. He was flying a kite in a deserted yard. His eyes were fixed on the kite that his hands were skillfully guiding. The kite floated high up in the sky almost touching its ineffable blueness. Shidoo watched it as if enchanted.

Shreepat watched the kite too. He watched until he was so dizzy he thought he also was floating high up in the air. Then he wanted to handle the kite, to hold the string and feel in the pit of his stomach the fear that the string would slip from his hands and the kite would float away in the distance, become a mere speck, and disappear.

But Shreepat wasn't brave enough to ask Shidoo. He was scared, but it was not the beating that scared him. He was quite used to that.

He stood a little away from Shidoo. He kicked a few stones, waved his arms, and muttered aloud. But Shidoo did not notice him. Shreepat waited and waited while telling himself that he did not care. He raised his arms and turned round and round in circles, saying that he did not care.

And then before he knew what he was doing, he was tugging at Shidoo's sleeve and calling to him. Shidoo turned round and looked at him with contempt and cold hatred. He dived at Shreepat and screamed, "Get away, you pimp. Why have you come back? Why are you licking my feet like a dog?"

Shreepat cringed. He knew it was hopeless. He knew he would never be accepted again. He felt so utterly lost and

scared that he wanted to fall into Shidoo's arms and weep. He hated himself and he hated Shidoo. He picked up a stone and hurled it at him—it hit Shidoo on the shin.

This made Shidoo furious. He tied the kite string to a bush and rushed after Shreepat. When he caught him he beat him until his hands ached. Then he kicked him. Shreepat whined and screamed and rolled on the ground. Then he lay motionless, dazed. After a while he sat up and then unsteadily got to his feet. He could not walk far, so he sat down again and stared at the ground. Something on the ground caught the sunlight and glistened. Shreepat automatically picked it up and looked at it: it was an anna. He put it in his pocket, still sitting dazed and thinking of nothing. He could see the kite floating high in the sky although he had no desire to see it.

After a while a tramp came along. He saw the kite and walked over to Shidoo.

"Let me handle the kite for a while," he said.

Shidoo was so engrossed that he did not hear him.

"You heard what I said, you rat! Give it to me," growled the tramp.

Shidoo heard him this time and snapped back, "No, I won't. I don't owe your father anything, do I?"

The tramp slapped Shidoo so hard that he fell down. Then he took the kite string in his hand. Shidoo got up and swung at the tramp, who just pushed him aside with a movement of his arm. Shidoo rushed at him again. The tramp got mad. He let the kite go and beat him. Shidoo struggled and screamed and cursed the tramp, but this only got him more of a beating. In the end Shidoo had no strength left to fight and he just lay limp on the ground.

As Shreepat watched this, he roused from his stupor. His eyes were bright and danced with joy when Shidoo was slapped to the ground, in fact he giggled uncontrollably. But he was frightened when the tramp beat up Shidoo and made him cry. Shreepat tremblingly got to his feet and made protective move-

ments with his little hands. He wanted to rush forward to stop them, but he was too frightened to do that. So he started to cry. He waved his hands and cried. When Shidoo gave up and lay limp on the ground and the tramp went on beating him, Shreepat could stand it no longer. Before he knew what he was doing, he rushed forward and tugged at the tramp's arm.

"Let go," he cried, "Let go. Stop it. No. No please."

The tramp pushed him away with a movement of his arm, gave Shidoo a final kick, and walked away. Shreepat hesitantly moved close to Shidoo and touched him timidly. Shidoo looked up at him, his eyes burning with hatred. He made a move to get up and cried, "You pimp. You . . ."

He wanted to strangle Shreepat. He wanted to squeeze his throat until he was dead. But the outburst of fury died out suddenly. His body was so sore and he felt so weak that he lay back limp and dazed.

There was such a big lump in Shreepat's throat that he could neither swallow nor breathe. He put his little hand on Shidoo's arm and kept on swallowing hard. But the lump only grew bigger and hurt him more.

"Beat me. Slap my face. Kick me if you like," he wanted to say. But the lump was so big he could not speak.

He did not know what to do. Yet he desperately wanted to do something. His mind searched blindly until he remembered the anna in his pocket. He timidly offered it to Shidoo, feeling terribly ashamed that he could do nothing better for his mamoo. His hand trembled so much that the anna slipped and rolled away in the dust. But the sunlight caught it and Shidoo saw it. He lay there staring at the coin shining in the dust.

ALEXANDER TROCCHI: A Note on George Orwell

In the realm of human behaviour God has functioned primarily as a witness against whose judgments men have measured (or pretended to measure) the validity of their own. If God is evicted, the very possibility of such a comparison is annihilated, and responsibility, the phosphorescent struts of the conscious self, is, as it were, left in the void.

To whom am I responsible? To myself? And for what?

Unlike his more philosophical French contemporaries Orwell never, to my knowledge, consciously posed such questions. In a Godless world his naked and undefended plea was for "decency, liberty, and justice," a plea which, in his own gentle and unpolitical mind, was synonymous with a plea for Socialism.

". . . looking back through my work," he wrote in 1947 (*Why I Write*), "I see that it is invariably where I lacked *political* purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally." No estimate of Orwell's work would be further from the truth. His purpose was seldom so much political as humanitarian (or moral) and where he tried to make it so, as in the present work*—it was written on assignment for the *Left Book Club* and first published in 1937—the result is an unsuccesful medley of firsthand description, time-staled statistics, and naïve political exhortation. In spite of some fine description, I doubt if the book would ever have seen the light again if it hadn't been written by Orwell. Threadbare phrases like ". . . the real Socialist is one who . . . actively wishes —to see tyranny overthrown . . ." and "All that is needed is to

* *The Road to Wigan Pier,* by George Orwell (Harcourt, Brace & Co., $4.50).

hammer two facts home into the public consciousness. One, that the interests of all exploited people are the same; the other, that Socialism is compatible with common decency," and ". . . only Socialist nations can fight effectively," are hard to take in 1958.

A most important essay for an understanding of Orwell is entitled *Inside the Whale*. This essay, written in 1939 before and after the declaration of war, was published as the title essay of a book in 1940, and was significantly omitted from the collection of critical essays published in 1946. Written in a moment of extremity, when it must have occurred to Orwell that all his concern for "political issues" had availed the world nothing, it is a rather pussyfooting English assessment—because of the obscenity "one is determined above all not to be impressed" *—of the writing of that holy Nero of American literature, Henry Miller. Orwell's fundamental honesty comes through. He admires Miller because he "has chosen to drop the Geneva language of the ordinary novel and drag the *real-politik* of the inner mind into the open."

"Good novels," he continues, "are written by people who are *not frightened*. This brings me back to Henry Miller." Orwell argues reasonably "that for a creative writer possession of 'truth' is less important than emotional sincerity." He draws a parallel from the First World War, feeling "like Mr Forster, that by simply standing aloof and keeping touch with pre-war emotions, Eliot was carrying on the human heritage." (The reference is to *Prufrock*, which was published in 1947.) He concludes "that passive, non-cooperative attitude implied in Henry Miller's work is justified. Whether or not it is an expression of what people *ought* to feel, it probably comes somewhere near to expressing what they *do* feel."—"Here in my opinion is the only imaginative prose-writer of the slightest value who has

* There is a curiously revelatory focus on Miller's obscenity—as though that were germaine to anything but a conditioned response pattern to taboo words.

appeared among the English-speaking races for some years past."

Orwell describes his meeting with Miller:

> I first met Miller at the end of 1936, when I was passing through Paris on my way to Spain. What most intrigued me about him was to find that he felt no interest in the Spanish war whatever. He merely told me in forcible terms that to go to Spain at that moment was the act of an idiot. He could understand anyone going there from purely selfish motives, out of curiosity, for instance, but to mix oneself up in such things *from a sense of obligation* was sheer stupidity. In any case my ideas about combatting Fascism, defending democracy, etc., were all baloney. Our civilisation was destined to be swept away and replaced by something so different that we should scarcely regard it as human—a prospect that did not bother him. . . .

The implication of this essay (and the hesitation evident in his constant qualifications contributes to the view) is that for the moment at least (1939) Orwell is sick to death of the political optimism which dominated English literature in the thirties. He himself had contributed to that optimism . . . "the common man will win his fight sooner or later . . ." and:

> *No bomb that ever burst*
> *Shatters the crystal spirit.*

By September 1939, Orwell, always unorthodox ("No one who feels deeply about literature, or even prefers good English to bad, can accept the discipline of a political party."), has lost faith. Apart from a pamphlet (*The Lion and the Unicorn*), he publishes nothing for nearly five years, and then, in 1945, *Animal Farm* appears. And from now on his approach to politics is entirely negative. He moves from the extreme pessimism of *Animal Farm* to the even extremer pessimism of *1984* (1949); his concern is for the spiritual integrity of the individual in a world which seems to be moving inexorably towards totalitarianism.

For all his polemical brilliance Orwell was not a profound thinker. There is something "occasional" about most of his

writing. V. S. Pritchett once called him "the conscience of his generation" and this is appropriate insofar as we can clearly distinguish between "conscience" and consciousness." He was a moralist, a preacher, a pamphleteer, an honest man who threw himself wholeheartedly into a book or an essay in the same way as he threw himself into extreme situations in life—and with indignation. This led naturally to contradiction—I think no one would deny that his works are riddled with contradictions —and, more seriously, from my point of view, to his failure to descend into the belly of the whale, to cross the threshold into himself. This makes him in a sense the most uncontemporary of contemporary writers. In his concern for the day to day movement of sociological currents he never seriously concerned himself with the fact that, after all, everything is filtered through the prism of self, that it is not enough to control what is acting upon one from without, and that it is precisely when men in their organisational zeal forget this that freedom dies. The notion of freedom arises when a man feels himself to be the victim of external forces—I am speaking of political freedom—and in our times, when it is totalitarianism that threatens, it is essentially a protest of the relatively apolitical against the overzealously political.

The emergence of the mass, the pressure of mass values: it is, as Orwell knew, almost meaningless to say you are against the emergence of the mass, like saying you are against molecular fission. The proliferation of vast projects in human engineering and the resultant threat to the integrity of the individual, is a direct consequence of the *sudden* emergence of the mass. Ortega y Gasset speaks of the "vertical invaders," referring to the hundreds of million of men of no tradition being born into history through a trapdoor—a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. By and large, the education for these men-without-roots has been governed by the technological requirements of expanding industry. What culture they have has been acquired from the daily newspapers, pulp or slick maga-

zines, the popular cinema, lately from television. The technician, qua technician, is essentially passive, and the structural attitude which is imposed upon him during his working hours is carried away by him into his leisure hours; he is the victim of leisure, not its master. Restless, passive, with few vital inner resources and little creative doubt, he has to be amused, and, as a consumer of amusement, he is subjected to the same batteries of techniques which have boosted production. There is no doubt that this kind of efficiency-consciousness is dangerously closed. One might say that man's idea of himself is something less than it was before God became a stuffed owl in the museum of natural history.

Orwell himself was intermittently aware of all this and overwhelmingly so in his last works. This comes out particularly in his concern for the precision of language—"the totalitarians use language to obscure thought"; and "Newspeak" (*1984*)—"was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum." In the world of *1984* revolt is no longer possible because skepticism is impossible: ". . . the expression of unorthodox opinions, above a very low level, was well-nigh impossible." The only hope as far as Winston Smith was concerned was the existence of the proles. The future belonged to them.

This tremulous breath of hope (all there is in *1984*) sounds suspiciously like Orwell's earlier sentimental statement: "... the common man will win his fight sooner or later. . . ." It is this kind of vulgar democratic unreflectiveness, this obstinate subordination of his vision to the idol of his era, that prevented him from directing his creative energies to the more vital level of insight which begins with a total revolt against all abstractions with which society traps, labels, and affixes status to the individual, and whose object is the self, here and now and unique and doomed in the end to absurdity in a strange cosmos. Insofar as Orwell stopped short of this total revolt, preferring instead

to concern himself with "socio-economic vectors," "class oppression," and all the other abstractions of the "socially conscious," he is of little interest for those of us who come after him, but then, as I suggested at the beginning, one gets the feeling in spite of his constant references to politics that he was fundamentally unpolitical, that if he hadn't lived when he did, when it was fashionable to be "socially conscious," the superb, poetical element which is present in all his work would have made him one of our models. Around 1933, in a short essay entitled "A Hanging" he wrote:

> It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life off when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working—bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming—all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth-of-a-second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned—reasoned even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone—one mind less, one world less.

We shall go on reading Orwell for this kind of thing, but one cannot help regretting that Orwell didn't take time out from society to explore one such world.

E. S. SELDON: Lolita and Justine

Three years after Paris publication, *Lolita** finally comes out in New York intact—or as delightfully *non intacta* as ever. G. P. Putnam's Sons are to be congratulated. I have not been so haunted by a novel since Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children*. The Enchanted Hunters! Beardsley College! And a new American idiom: "to go back to Pisky." Frankly, my supreme test of imaginative prose is as simple as this: one or more of the situations and/or key phrases must acquire archetypal force, be henceforward applicable to experiences of my own, and apter than whatever had served before. To the objection (often advanced by friends) that this is a test in which works like *The Swiss Family Robinson* or the Dr. Doolittle series might come off better than Edith Wharton or *Finnegans Wake*, I reply that this is no objection at all. I just read novels and poetry, am not working for a graduate degree in anything.

Nabokov is not a satirist in the classical sense; he is a comic novelist, writing out of a continental, rather than an English, tradition. *Lolita* is the novel of a man-with-an-obsession: how he comes to understand his obsession, how he sets out to realize it, his difficulties, his successes, and the consequences to himself and others. *Life itself*—with sex assigned the prominent place it deserves in any life—*viewed as an obsession*. There is no nonsense about Humbert Humbert lacking insight into his "problem," and no nonsense, either, about any obligations he may be under (to some hypostatized Nature or Society) to be somebody else than the person he is. For better or for worse, he is one of life's heroes, not one of its victims. And when he finally suffers the consequences—after a wonderful, penultimate, climactic scene, like the paroxysmic finale to some old Buster Keaton or Marx Brothers movie, made tragic by being run off in slow motion—his fate satisfies, because it is just. Under the razzle-dazzle style and almost too ingenious plotting (*all* the important events are fortuitous), Vladimir Nabokov has unlimited reserves

* *Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabokov (G. P. Putnam's Sons, $5.00).

of humanity (not to be confused with humanism) and a very firm piety to elemental reason (not to be confused with rationalism). I had forgotten what it was like to be addressed so politely, to be permitted to laugh at myself so intelligently. These are eighteenth-century qualities.

In the book I make on humane letters, the marquis de Sade is the surest bet on any modern track. My particular touchstone of excellence, if you prefer. When I compare Vladimir Nabokov to Sade, and *Lolita* to that astonishing series of five books written in Paris (and all but one of them published there) between 1785 and 1797, I mean nothing but the sincerest tribute to Mr. Nabokov's powers and achievement. Few, indeed, are the novelists (and their novels) who, mentioned in the same breath with Sade, do not instantly vaporize. Louis-Ferdinand Céline's first novel was one exception; I keep hoping that Mary McCarthy's next will be one. Surely it is the very rarest, but also the most precious of all gifts to be able to set against the engrained common sense of an epoch an imaginative universe sufficiently dense to withstand all misunderstanding, and intelligently enough organized to be right, in the end. This is the only variety of playing with human fate I do respect.

Of course, Nabokov has not set himself anything like so *enormous* a task as Sade. Not even Jonathan Swift, after all, had imagined a conflict in nature and history between Good People and Bad People, calculated and elaborated in infinite detail to make us wonder just how good is a good, just how bad is a bad, the only *sure* definition of which is their mutual hostility to the death. But one big difference between Sade and Nabokov is really a difference between their respective eras. Sade had to make his points systematically, intellectually, dotting all *i*'s and leaving no hypothetical objection unexplored. Nabokov, on the other hand, must disguise whatever point he has—and he has a very serious point—out of deference to the phony-precise, intellectually discreditable terms of associative psychology and "positive" observation. And yet, without coming

openly into conflict with those terms, Nabokov has brought off a very neat bit of undermining. He has driven a wedge of laughter into the Emersonian confusion which still fogs us on many intellectual and artistic fronts: the conviction of a fundamental (original or ultimate) identity between mind and nature, knowledge and opinion, fact and feeling.

This is not the place to rewrite two hundred years of modern intellectual history, but the pervasive unreality of our moral life—only one element of which is the detachment of knowledge as professional activity without bearing upon public or private conduct—can be traced directly back to this cosmological conviction of an earlier modern times. As long as it was conceived in spiritual terms, as a goal of thought, as an end of civilization, one would have been curmudgeonly indeed to take exception to it. Scienticized and institutionalized, however, in the terms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century national states, and systematically misunderstood as a *given* property of the phenomenal universe (of nature and history alike), then we must begin to speak of confusion and irrationalism literally *built into* modern civilization. Whereas the doctrine of Natural Law was, and remained, a speculative goal and a vehicle of ethical aspiration, the post-eighteenth-century social sciences, based upon fiat norms inaccessible to criticism, can only describe actual human experiences in time and space according to where they fall on one or another chart of "deviations" or "aberrations."

This would all be much clearer to us had Sade's principal fictions not been subjected to such heavy censorship for over a century and a half, and to a resolute international academic taboo. Sade satirized the social sciences *avant la lettre*: he showed in the plainest and most comprehensive detail just how the benevolent and progressive-spirited philosophy of the Enlightenment could be transformed into the most bloody-minded and historically violent kind of "civilization" the West has ever known. Sade's hero-monsters and heroines refer to themselves as *philosophes* nearly as often as they refer to themselves as

scélérats and *scélératesses*. . . . Obviously, Nabokov has not set himself so enormous a task, but the mere fact that he and his characters are not forever arguing, like Sade and his, should not seem to conceal in underlying intellectual affinity. Not only is the conclusion to Part I right out of *Justine*—there was really nowhere else for her to go—but this cool, deceptively diffident comedian is well aware that a pill big enough to choke a horse must be more than merely sugar coated. The patient can only be made to swallow it when his attention is kept on other things. On really comic intercultural exchanges and conflicts, for example, or on purely literary kicks like a rewrite of Kafka's Great Nature Theater of Oklahoma in the spirit and manner of Dorothy Parker, *meilleur cru*.

Attractively packaged, and full of rewards even for readers who may not care to examine the pill within the pill, *Lolita* is a work whose author long since assimilated Kant's hard saying (uttered in the last decade of the eighteenth century): "The habit of regarding the absence of vice as a conformity of the *mind* to the law of duty (as *virtue*) must itself be designated a radical perversity of the human heart." Perhaps this helps explain why, when Humbert Humbert *pretends* to be a conformist, his performance is so much more skillful than that of many end-products of depth analysis. A veritable Lenin of the sensibility (or the "moral imagination"), he is simply furthering the aims of his obsession by other means—what else? As we sail into the sunset, that is the thought to hold: be good, for the wrong reasons.

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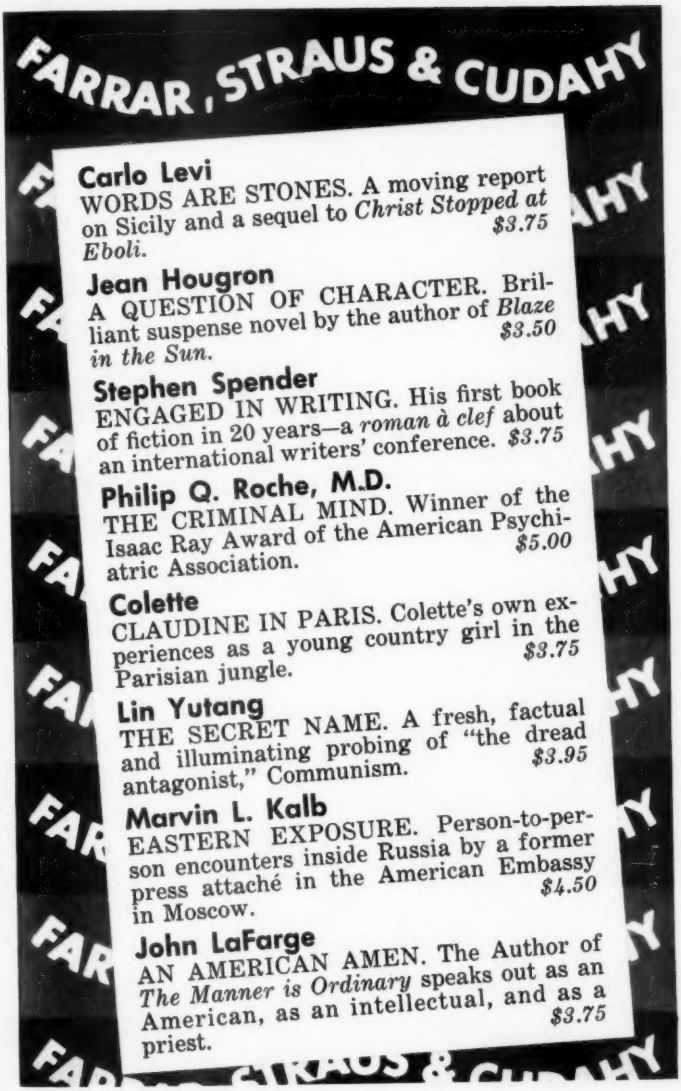
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AMOS VOGEL: The Angry Young Film Makers

In Brussels, in the spring of 1958: a huge, glimmering, high-priced, chromium-plated concoction of artificialities, the World's Fair, in which the world's governments propagandistically project antiseptic and idealized self-images. The revelations of national character are present; but they are unintentional.

The U.S.S.R. and the U.S. pavilions: the deadly earnestness, the massive mediocrity of the Russian effort; the flippant sophistication, the open, democratic purposelessness of the American. To ascend to the Russian pavilion, one must mount an imposing row of stairs —(as Man Ray puts it, similar to the Aztec pyramids, which the victim is forced to ascend—only to be sacrificed at the top). The American pavilion: at ground level, behind a charming and incongruous lagoon, its many glass doors wide and invitingly open; while at the Russian pavilion, only 2 or 3 of the doors are open at any one time, the others forbiddingly and inexplicably closed. The American pavilion: an ornate message from a rich planet in outer space, delivered at the wrong wave length: "Look how happy and rich we are," with no means of space transportation offered to the earth-bound Europeans to arrive at similar bliss. The Russian pavilion: "Look what hard-working, backward peasants we are"—solemnity, puritanism, pompousness, the stuffy odor of bureaucratism and a truly spectacular display of mid-Victorian *kitsch* in its art and interior decor sections: the ornate lamps with the glass beads, the rugs, the colored glass animals, the horrendous cups and saucers with the flowers. A wall to wall painting, stupendous in size, of a young girl walking through the fields with a bouquet in her arms, entitled, of course, "Spring." The usual paintings of happy workers parading through the streets, perhaps to celebrate Nagy's execution. In the American pavilion, the subtle satire of Steinberg's murals, totally lost on all but the European sophisticates; and the emaciated, sterile, coldly beautiful models walking down a ramp into an ethereal indoor pool that has the visitors transfixed. "Atmospheric" differences between the two giants are clearly noticeable; the sheer and deadly "weight," the authoritarian whiff of the Russians, and the free, disordered casualness of the Americans, modern, sunlit, but quite cool and inaccessible except to the native-born. There is humor and some self-deprecation here; there is none in the Russian pavilion. The Russians relate to the Europeans, if only in a perverse way: "This is what you, too, could be like, if only—," while the Americans lack any ideological message except to say "This is who we are." And the ugly barrenness of the American soda fountain type "restaurant"—complete with slow service and 65¢ milk shakes, is perhaps the exact counterpart of the plush, mid-19th century Russian restaurant, in which a complaint concerning the loudness of

their "Muzak" system is met with a terrifying symbolic statement, pronounced in measured voice by the headwaiter: "The level-of-the-music-is-not-controlled-by-us-only-the-center-can-change-it. . . ."

In Brussels, in the spring of 1958: an unruly red wig slithers across a table, envelops a glass, sips the liquid it contains through a straw and then crushes it in an octopus-like grip. A troupe of restlessly agitated abstract forms, scratched onto film without the intervention of a camera, nervously pulsates to the rhythms of African tribal chants. An occult ritual moves hypnotically across three screens, while the producer sprinkles incense across the front of the theatre. A series of harrowing documentary shots of concentration camps are set to the strains of a popular rock and roll ballad. And a reverent religious procession, led by a bearded priest, suddenly moves into 2-step and then into spasmodic reverse motion, heading into nothingness.

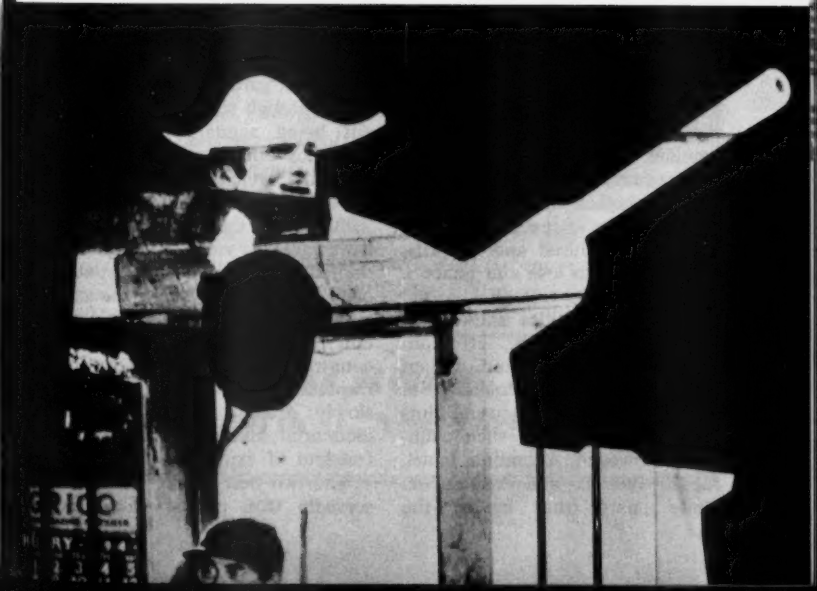
Such is an indication of the range of the International Experimental Film Festival held this spring in Brussels in conjunction with the World's Fair under the auspices of the Belgian Cinemateque. Spurred on by the totally unexpected promise of $15,000 in prizes (donated by Gevaert and SIBIS), the international experimental film movement, glorious and impoverished stepchild of a huge industry, responded by spewing forth 400 entries, from 1 to 80 minutes in length, of which 130 were found worthy of final consideration by the pre-screening jury.

Among these 130 final contestants are synthetic sound experiments, poetic, expressionist, dadaist, surrealist, symbolist works, abstract color animations, hand-drawn films, films shot in negative color, with *musique concrete*, or sound tracks produced optically without musical instruments, films made with the oscillograph, experiments with light, prisms and distortion lenses.

For an entire week, an enthusiastic audience of critics, intellectuals, film nuts, and film makers, watched these experiments parade across the screen at the rate of 9 hours per day, applauding, hooting, whistling, while an illustrious international jury tried determinedly to keep eyes open to the films and ears closed to the noise around them.

On the jury were, unexpectedly, Grierson, legendary ideologue of documentary; McLaren, the eminent animator, in danger of becoming a saint in his own lifetime, dazedly observing a parade of imitators of his own style; Oertel, producer of *Michelangelo*; Varèse, the noted contemporary composer; Man Ray, link to the classic postwar I avant-garde; Alexeyeff, producer of the unparalleled *Night on Bald Mountain*; Pierre Prévert, director of *Oh Leonard* and *Voyage Surprise*. Ensconced (expenses paid) and strangely out of place at one of Brussels' luxury hotels, they argued for hours after each of the exhausting screenings, only to be confronted with yet another 20

Stills from *Studie Warten* (top)
and *Jamestown Baloos* (bottom)



aural and visual attacks on the audience the morning after.

For "attacks" these films are most decidedly. Far removed from the innocuous placebos served up by the commercial theatres to passive consumers of mass culture, these poverty-stricken little films literally aim to explode the filmic frame itself. They explore in technique, treatment, style and form, the limits of the cinematic medium, revealing both its and their own potential and limitations.

Crude, exuberant, antidiplomatic, highly original or highly derivative, they display the vitality, the uncompromising violence, the unorderedness and anarchic freedom of youth. Unhampered by considerations of box-office or worldly success, they attack the (to them) false gods of puritanism, commerce, religion, mass culture and conformity, often missing the mark, yet at least aware of its existence. At times precious and jejune, they nevertheless attempt to hew to values far removed from those of the marketplace and to emulate, in their own field, the best creative efforts of the avant-garde in other media. Theirs is the desperate, last-ditch sincerity of the stepchildren and outcasts, with nothing to lose and hence a willingness to say it all.

Of the 130 titles shown, 50 came from the U.S., 20 from France, 12 from England, 9 from Germany, 7 from Poland; but surprisingly enough, unusual films were also entered by such countries as Sweden, Argentina, Israel, Japan, Austria and Yugoslavia. Quite apart from having the largest number of entries, the Americans also walked off with 6 out of 11 prizes. While this pre-eminence of the U.S. is noteworthy, the real revelation of the festival was the existence of a contemporary avant-garde in Poland.

From amongst the morass of so-called "socialist realism" of the East—the most sterile and conservative artistic tendency of our day—comes, not one lone experiment (that in itself would have been sensational), but an entire school, an avant-garde movement. The Polish October that brought Gomulka to power expressed itself also in the cinema. Seven films were entered, produced and paid for by the state film monopoly Film Polski, in 35mm and in color, representing surrealism, dadaism, abstract art, poetic and expressionist techniques. To be sure, there are derivative and jejune elements (apparently every new avant-garde movement needs to go through similar stages without being acquainted with the works of other countries); to be sure, the welcome state subsidy works both ways and may be withheld on the morrow just as it was granted yesterday (Poland's limited artistic freedoms are today once more in jeopardy); the fact remains that behind the Iron Curtain there exists, at least in one country, a youth exposed to and responsive to contemporary art, slowly groping its way amidst dictatorial ukases to a greater freedom of expression.

The two best Polish works deservedly won prizes: *Dom*, the

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Grand Prix; *Two Men and a Chest,* a Bronze Medal. This writer would have reversed the awards.

Dom (The House) defies description. It is a work clearly in the surrealist and dadaist tradition, derivative, but thoroughly refreshing, thoroughly "free," combining cutouts, live action, drawings. In it, the "red wig" makes its triumphant entry; in it, the compulsive restatements, so effectively used by the "classic" post-war I Western avant-garde, appear to full advantage; a man enters a room, backwards, and places his hat on a rack; this action is repeated almost ten times. Directed by Walerian Borowczyk and Jan Lenica, the film, in the words of the jury, "shows an attempt to make use of the possibilities inherent in cinematographic art, which is a purely visual art."

Two Men and a Chest (by Raymond Polansky) succeeds, by means of brilliant images and a truly poetic conception, in the impossible: to blend what superficially appears as a light and fantastic comedy with a social comment of the most profound severity. Two men emerge from the sea with a dilapidated wardrobe, symbolic of a mysterious treasure. They attempt to interest organized society in it, but to no avail. While they lightheartedly pursue their task (accompanied by a lilting jazz accompaniment), hooligans, pickpockets, murderers and drunks crowd the edges of the frame. Society has no room for ambiguous and possibly dangerous treasures, and prefers to

pursue its own set and corrupt ways; and appropriate conclusions are drawn by the two protagonists in a brilliant and provocative ending to a memorable work.

No other East European country had entries, except Yugoslavia, which sent an unusual art film based on the woodcuts of a noted Yugoslav artist portraying the last minutes in a man's life. Very well-substantiated rumor has it that the Russians entered ten documentaries in the mistaken notion that they were "experimentals."

Of the remaining prizes (all of the prize-winning films, including the Polish ones, will be shown by Cinema 16 this season), 6 were garnered by the Americans, the Second Prize of the festival ($5,000) falling to Len Lye's *Free Radicals*. With beautiful and exemplary economy of means, this long-neglected precursor of McLaren and UPA, undoubtedly one of the most original living talents in his field, creates a perfectly controlled work that surpasses in its simplicity and form most of the other, more elaborate works shown at the festival. The abstract designs are directly engraved on plain black leader film in a "direct" film technique without the intervention of a camera. As the jury put it, " 'Direct' film animation gives an image of extreme kinetic tension. The imagery of *Free Radicals* exploits this. A 'Free Radical' is a fundamental particle of matter which contains the energy of all chemical change, very much like a compressed spring before release. The film

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gives an artistically symbolic portrayal of fundamental energy."

There was also a special award by the selection jury to "all of the films of Stan Brakhage," one of the most talented and radical of the young American experimenters, whose originality and filmic explorations have finally brought him to his most extreme and most controversial work, the 50-minute color film *Anticipation of the Night,* which created a near riot in Brussels; and Bronze Medals were awarded to Francis Thompson's semi-abstract fantasy of New York from dawn to dusk, *N.Y., N.Y.,* a dazzling and stunning display of cinematic trickery and ingenuity, leading to some of the most breathtakingly poetic images of the city ever captured on film (this also won the Award of Exceptional Merit at the 1958 Creative Film Foundation Competition in the U.S.); to Hilary Harris' *Highway,* a restless and overpowering visualization of the American "road," set to rock-and-roll and photographed mostly from vehicles moving at high speed; to Hy Hirsh's *Gyromorphosis,* an "animation" of Nieuwenhuys' constructivist sculptures, with jazz; and finally, the special "L'Age D'Or" Award presented by the Belgian film critics to Kenneth Anger's study in black magic, *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome,* an ornate re-creation of occult rituals in the best traditions of decadent art.

The three remaining prize winners came from Israel (Yoram Gross' *Chansons sans paroles,* an animation of newspaper sheets and match sticks); from the Argentine (Rudolfo Kuhn's *Symphony in No B-flat);* and from France (Agnes Varda's *L'Opéra mouffe*).

Symphony in No B-flat, a mordant little satire, takes place the day after an atomic bomb has been dropped. Mutations have been created; two choir boys officiating at a wedding get married to each other instead; and memory has been erased, compelling young people to go to school once more to relearn the emotions of love.

L'Opéra mouffe, winner of the International Federation of Film Societies Award, is a film of haunting and profound originality, with a love sequence of such erotic fervor as to send the censorious screaming to the exits. It is a poetic documentary "in depth" of an impoverished section of Paris, with vivid and often terrifying images of the poor, the anxious, the old, the children, the lovers—and, as a framing theme, obsessional in power, images of pregnancy and fertility.

But there were other films of interest, which may well have deserved prizes too.

There was the work of the bold Herbert Vesely, *Nicht Mehr Fliehen* (No More Fleeing), winner of the highest 1957 Creative Film Foundation Award; a beautifully photographed and hypnotic paraphrase on mankind's atomic cul-de-sac, with two ambiguous travelers trapped in a desolate landscape that suddenly erupts in violence; followed by Vesely's newest, *Prelude,* a poetically conceived impression of a pause

during a ballet rehearsal, with dancers and theatre personnel grouped in casual and evocative incidents.

There was Hulten-Nordenstrom's *A Day in Town* (winner of the 1958 Creative Film Foundation Award for exceptional merit) a wild, dadaist explosion that starts as a typical Fitzpatrick travelogue of Stockholm and ends in the city's total destruction by fire and dynamite in one of the most hilarious and anarchic film experiments on record.

There was Maya Deren's celestial ballet, *The Very Eye of Night,* a mysterious and mystical transformation of space and human forms, photographed mostly in negative; *Nice Time,* Goretta and Tanner's somber account of the empty and heartbreaking pleasures of Piccadilly by night; Christopher Young's *Subject Lesson* (Creative Film Foundation Winner 1957), symbolic tracing of the development of man's consciousness, with startling juxtapositions of familiar objects and incongruous backgrounds; Vanderbeek's *What, Who, How,* a comedy of "the unexpected that lies beneath the real," a surrealist mélange of paper cutouts, with country houses, young men, terrible animals, jewelry emerging from the heads of beautiful New York models.

There were several original animation efforts: Pintoff's and Whitney's painless and charming introductions to the abstract film, *Performing Painter* and *Blues Pattern,* made for UPA; Pintoff's *Flebus,* a cartoon with a theme not usually dealt with in entertainment productions; John Hubley's *The Adventures of Asterisk,* a highly original attempt to deal with the concepts and values of modern art purely visually (produced in cooperation with the Guggenheim Museum and James Johnson Sweeney); Richard Williams' surprising *The Little Island,* one of the "discoveries" of the festival, an animated morality play, visualizing (without a single word spoken) atomic war, neutralism, power politics, moral crusades—and doing so with both humor and foreboding; there was the exuberance and utter charm of Carmen D'Avino's work, displayed in *The Big "O"* and *Motif* (1957 Creative Film Foundation Award); the impish and sophisticated visual puns and sallies of the highly original Robert Breer (*Cats, Jamestown Baloos* and *A Man and His Dog out for Air*).

Shirley Clarke's *Moment in Love* is a poetic love ballet, choreographed by Anna Sokolow; Willard Maas' and Ben Moore's *Narcissus,* a re-creation of the classic myth in modern terms (Creative Film Foundation Award 1957).

Five other films deserve special mention. Two from France: Jean Dasque's spoof, *Cinesumac,* a very unusual portrayal of a "sound" from the time it escapes from a singer's gaping mouth (in close-up, with both tonsils showing) to the time it is captured on a film strip; and Jean-Daniel Pollet's *Pourvu qu'on ait l'ivresse,* which in its cold-blooded and pitiful portrayal of an adolescent dance-hall as a sexual jungle leaves the

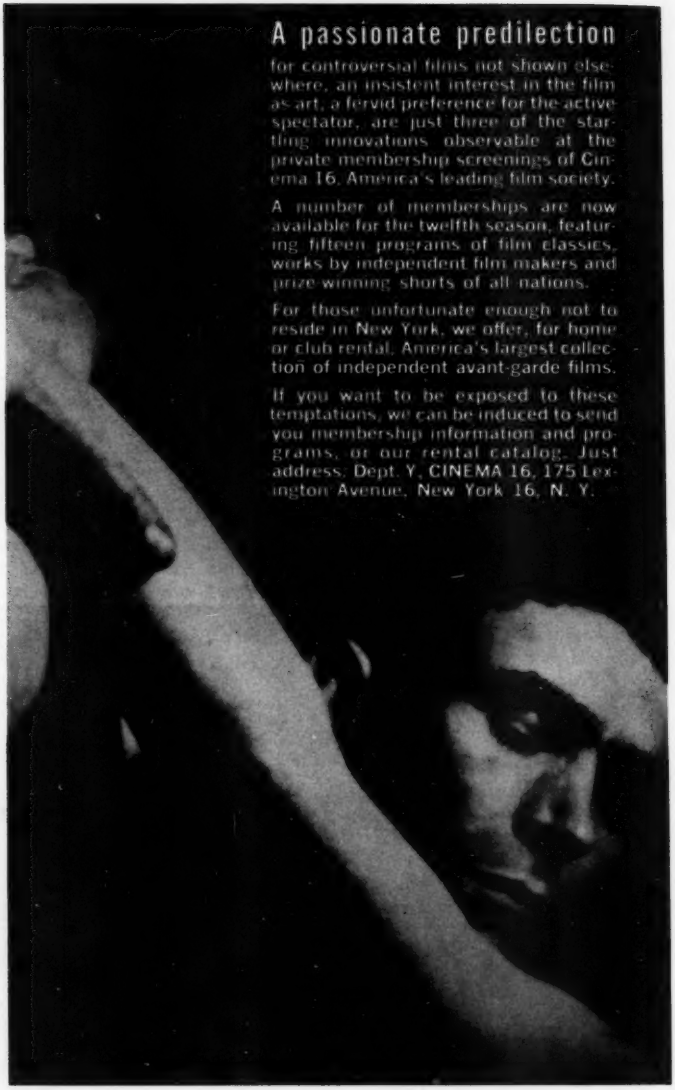
similar *Marty* sequence at the post. From Spain, *La Gran Siguriya* (by José Val del Omar), a dark, explosive, somber, cruel and unpredictable work of the deepest passion, which in its best sections combines the heightened realism of Bunuel's *Land without Bread* with the surrealism of his *Un Chien Andalou.* From Sweden, Peter Weiss' *According to Law* (embroiled with censorship laws in several countries), an unsentimental yet passionate, poetic yet factual investigation of a Swedish prison and its inmates. Finally, from Mexico, Carlos Toussaint's *La Canción de Jean Richepin.* Asked by his beloved to bring his mother's heart for her dog, a hopeless lover tears it out, stumbles with it, lets it fall. Rolling across the floor, the heart gasps out: "Are you hurt, my son?"

Polyvision, Circarama, the Czech experiment and "Impressions of Speed" deserve mention as four experiments in screen and projection techniques. Polyvision, connected with the name of the French film pioneer Abel Gance, consists of the projection of 3 images upon one huge cinemascope-type screen; no attempt is made to join the 3 images as in Cinerama; in fact, different actions proceed on each of the 3 panels and at times only the center one is utilized; the effect, at least as shown at the festival, must be considered a failure artistically. It does not blend into one visual experience, and we are reminded jarringly of the mechanical contrivance employed. This time we are taken not on *one* rollercoaster ride as in Cinerama, but on *three*—simultaneously. The effect is totally self-defeating; the human eye simply cannot correlate these three disparate images into one joined subretinal experience.

Circarama, Walt Disney's totally unexpected (to this observer) success: a 360-degree film, projected onto joined screens spanning the entire circumference of a circular theatre, in the center of which the audience stands. The film was photographed by 12 cameras mounted in circular fashion on one truck, reproducing one "continuous" image on 12 film strips, spanning 360 degrees. The effect is startling, stunning; you are "in the midst" of Times Square, "surrounded by" Times Square (complete with stereophonic sound); and even the blatant patriotism of the images, complete with Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon, cannot obliterate the physio-psychological impast.

In the Czech pavilion, an intimate, small "theatre" features about 8 or 9 discontinuous screens, placed at various heights and angles and at some distance apart. The audience is seated on low, irregularly placed divans. Some of the screens tilt upward from the floor, others are placed at varying depths. The film—a record of a music and dance festival in Prague—proceeds on all, most, or only one panel and consists of separate film strips, ingeniously synchronized to provide an encompassing visual-

Stills from *The Little Island* (top)
and *L'Opéra mouffe* (bottom)



A passionate predilection

for controversial films not shown elsewhere, an insistent interest in the film as art, a fervid preference for the active spectator, are just three of the startling innovations observable at the private membership screenings of Cinema 16, America's leading film society.

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poetic whole. It succeeds, in part; the assembled experimental film makers watch in awe, hoping for similar state subsidies in their own countries, one may presume.

"Impressions of Speed": in a special pavilion, a thoroughly engrossing experiment, for only 25 spectators at a time: the audience is seated as if in the cab of a simulated railroad engine, with a full view of the landscape not only in front but also on both sides of the train; a continuous all-encompassing image is projected through the simulated windows; stereophonic sound is used; the landscape flashes by, in perfect synchronization and in color, the total impression so vivid as to approach the actual experience. The jury is stumped: Has this film left behind the "illusion of art" and become "reality" itself?

Not many of the films shown at the festival can lay claim to greatness or completeness; and far less complimentary comments must be made regarding the majority of the other films shown and not mentioned in this article; for, much too often, freshness takes the place of originality, technique substitutes for meaning, form for content. Embarrassment is caused by purely derivative works, and by the adolescent preciousness of some of the others. But when all is said and done, there remains a feeling of vitality and promise, of scope and sincerity. To find even 25 unusual works among 130 is not too poor a percentage.

What binds these disparate and diverse works together? It is not merely their daring (at least as compared to the creations of the commercial cinema); it is primarily their emphasis on film as a *VISUAL* medium. This is a self-evident truth which today is being trampled to death in the mad scramble for wider screens and a more total approximation of reality, with the camera reduced to the level of a recording instrument. The contemporary cinema, more often than not, is literary in origin and form, tightly bound to (or rather emasculated by) a naturalistic sound track, dialogue and wide screens which have practically succeeded in destroying the true heart of cinematic art, the image, and its creative ordering into sequences of associative and hypnotic power via montage (editing). These experimental films restore the visual to the cinema. They remember Eisenstein, not Shakespeare. The sound track is utilized as a subsidiary component or as a creative counterpoint to the image, and not as a substitute for visual action and filmic progression (as occurs, for example, in such contemporary creations as *The Long Hot Summer* which is not a film but a literary artifact and can be reasonably well followed with eyes shut).

Duplicating, if decades late, contemporary art's break with realism and naturalism, they attempt to introduce into the film medium nonrealist storytelling, stream-of-consciousness, imagist, or symbolist techniques, surrealism, dada or, more modestly, poetic continuity and semi-ab-

stract animation. If, in Hans Richter's words, the contemporary commercial cinema represents 19th-century realist art, theirs is a desperate effort to break through to the 20th century, regardless of the incubus of the five million dollar mass market creations of Hollywood. In these poverty-stricken works, there is an effort at pushing film to its limits, technically, thematically and aesthetically.

Thematically, the search for "self" continues to predominate —and why not? The exploration and documentation of the soul is every whit as valid as that of the outer world. It is only through the understanding and mastery of both inner and outer realities that we can hope to control our environment and thereby our own fates. In the majority of these films, the "self" is explored either directly (via symbolist, poetic, expressionist techniques) or as it expresses itself in art (abstractions, collages, automatic painting). In the former, it is either the adjustment of the self to society and its values, or its self-realization and self-knowledge that matters. In the latter, it is the free flow of artistic imagination, the magic of artistic creation. Both are "relevant" to the social situation, notwithstanding the common accusations of preciousness, of ivory towerishness, often leveled against these films. Problems of alienation and atomization of the individual, problems of sex and love, problems of adjustment and conformity are eminently social in character. The works of the modern artist, even in their most abstract and nonrepresentational forms, are but a filtering and refraction of reality through the very contemporary subconscious of its maker.

In the narrower sense, direct social relevance is found in the ideological films shown at the festival, the "political" works, such as the antibourgeois spirit found in *A Day in Town, Cuckoo Waltz, What Who How*, the sharp social satire of *Life Is Beautiful* and *Symphony in No B-flat*, the social critique of *According to Law, Two Men and a Chest, Nice Time* and *No More Fleeing*.

They display a preoccupation with the H-bomb, with totalitarianism, mass culture, concentration camps, commercialism, bureaucratism. In all, there is a concern for the body politic, an attitude of commitment. For the makers of these films, in truth, are the Angry Young Men of the contemporary cinema. They may not express their anger in the "approved" realistic and naturalistic traditions of the early (and still uncompromised) documentary movement of the thirties or the works of the British Free Cinema movement of the middle fifties—but the anger is there, expressed in the vocabularies and often oblique techniques of contemporary art. Paralleling the Angry Young Men and the Beat Generation, their anger remains on a subpolitical plane; it is an expression of generalized anguish and tension vis-à-vis organized society, not a call to action.

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Perhaps the most "experimental" episode of the festival was the reception for the film makers given by the president of Gevaert (roughly, the European counterpart of Eastman-Kodak). It was held at his château, an authentic anachronism complete with moat, with 22 servants feeding champagne and sumptuous dainties to the "Hungry Young Men" of all nations. Candelabras, period furniture and woodwork, the high ceilings of European aristocracy blended into an incongruous and unforgettable whole, with the flaming West European Communist film maker, the pale Polish intellectual, the restless American outsider, the young fellow in fatigue jacket with only ten cents and a thoroughly original film to his name. A more experimental gathering Gevaert never did see. Finally, inebriated and exhausted, thoroughly corrupted by continental bourgeois munificence, the film makers were herded into special buses and driven thirty miles through the silent Belgian night back to the reality of their dingy rooms.

For the reality and future of the film avant-garde, as always, is precarious, its problems profound and continuing. The fundamental obstacle, of course, resides in these courageous artists' working in possibly the most expensive existing art medium. Even the relatively paltry sums involved in experimental productions are far higher than the out-of-pocket expenses of the aspiring painter, the young writer or poet. The "tools" of cinematic art are too expensive.

Now that the festival is over, the question remains: how will future productions be financed? The assembled film makers, needless to say, were deeply impressed by the fact that the Polish films were completely financed by the state; and, while it is true that such official munificence carries its own dangers of political control over the artist, it seems very attractive to people who have nothing to lose. Likewise, certain German experimentals have been partly subsidized by state or local governments out of the proceeds of the commercial film industry, and a similar method of financing has been used by the important British Film Institute's Experimental Production Committee. Yet, this state financing or subsidy cannot be hoped for in the U.S. in the foreseeable future. In the present climate of opinion, any production of surrealist films under Mr. Eisenhower's aegis would be considered "creeping socialism." Nor, it should be added, can such films expect to find any more favor under an administration headed by that sensible, well-ordered antidadaist and tortured standard-bearer of the semi-liberal phrase, Mr. Stevenson.

There remain private sources and here the work of the Creative Film Foundation opens unusual opportunities. Organized a few years back by a group of leading intellectuals and artists in several fields of endeavor (under the guidance of the energetic Maya

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Deren), the foundation exists to further the production and appreciation of works exploring the creative potential of the film medium. It has only recently been granted official nonprofit status by the government and is now approaching the large foundations for support. If such is forthcoming, grants will be offered to individual film makers.

There remains the exhibition and distribution of experimental films. In America, it was Miss Deren on the East Coast and Frank Stauffacher's Art in Cinema society on the West Coast which pioneered the public showing of experimental films, shortly followed by Cinema 16 which, over the past 12 years, has provided continuity and stability to the movement, enabling it to show all contemporary experimental works of interest. It has also established the most comprehensive library of the avant-garde for distribution to film societies, art museums, schools and interested individuals. This distribution is continuously growing (unlike the distribution of documentary and other types of films, which seem to suffer more profoundly from the impact of TV); yet, neither exhibition nor distribution have so far solved the financial problem of the avant-garde. The income remains —so far—too limited.

The result has been a lack of continuity in the movement, a passing from its ranks of its most talented members, only to be replaced, in each generation, by newcomers, who start afresh, from a low and derivative plane

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(as shown in the works of some of the new young West Coast film makers at Brussels). On the other hand, some of the "greats" of the movement are unable to continue their work. Peterson, the surrealist, has not made a film in years. Anger moved to Paris. Harrington is fashioning a Hollywood career. Broughton has left the movement, disillusioned. To continue, a film maker must be able to keep production costs minimal(this determines choice of subject matter and treatment) or he must have independent means.

Ultimately, the fate of this movement is tied to the fate of the cinema as a whole, to the fate of all art in a commercial society. The values of mass culture dominate in all media, but in none as much as in the medium of "family entertainment"—the cinema. The art of the moving image (already surely buffeted by the introduction of sound, the development of the large screens, the rise of television) may never be able to develop its full potential and may possibly be referred to by future generations as the art that never was. If so, perhaps the historians of tomorrow will fish out from a rusty time capsule some of the dilapidated, courageous films of this festival and exclaim; "Here, gentlemen, is a little example of what might have been."

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EDITORS,

In its first five issues *Evergreen Review* has shown some encouraging signs of becoming a refreshing quarterly bent on publishing lively, if not always first-rate, material. It has studiously avoided the pretentiousness of *Partisan Review*, whose titles, in a recent issue, sound like self-parody ("Whitman: The Paradox of Identity," "Symbolism and the Novel," "The Beat Generation: An Exchange," etc.); nor has it published the dull kind of writing often found in *New World Writing* (e.g., the abominable, amateurishly written James Jones story in No. 13). But occasionally *Evergreen Review* has been taken in, and one such lapse was the inclusion of Jack Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" in your fifth issue.

As therapy or self-analysis, I can see where Mr. Kerouac's ideas might be useful. He calls for confessional writing created in semi-trance, without revisions or selectivity. He tells us: "No pause to think of proper word but the infantile pileup of scatalogical buildup words till satisfaction is gained. . . ." Conceivably, this could be beneficial to the analysand, in recording his dreams and fantasies, or to anyone beset by hidden anxieties which might be uncovered by such a process. As communication, as a means of giving satisfaction to someone else, it is hit-and-miss, limited in its appeal and universality, and more often than not it only results in paucity of expression.

Mr. Kerouac also admonishes: "Never afterthink to 'improve' or defray impressions." It is the "subject of image at *moment* of writing" in which he is interested. What if this particular "moment of writing" was the wrong moment and later reflections in, say, a more receptive mood, prove more insightful, more poetic, more moving? Which "moment of writing" is to be rejected?

"Not 'selectivity' of expression but following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought, swimming in sea of English with no discipline. . . ." A writer, one hopes, has a vocabulary from which to draw, has taste, values, sensibility that are not necessarily spontaneous but often must be drawn out, nurtured, contemplated, developed.

Sincerely,
JOSEPH LESUEUR

EDITORS:

On June 9, the theatre in Ireland won an important victory over censorship. Captain Alan Simpson, director of the Pike Theatre, was discharged from court for lack of a prima-facie case. After refusing to amend a play at the order of the police, he had been charged with performances at his theatre that were indecent, obscene and profane. The play in question was Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*.

Captain Simpson was first arrested in the middle of May, 1957. The case, before the courts for over a year, was legally extraordinary. It was presented before the High Court and the Irish Supreme Court,

as well as a District Court, without ever coming to trial. The results were a triumph over the first attempt ever made by the Irish police to censor a stage presentation—and a heavy burden of debt for the Pike Theatre. Costs amounting to £2,500 ($7,000) were not awarded.

To date £200 has been raised. Half of it came after an appeal published last year by the English magazine *Encore*. The appeal was sponsored by Sean O'Casey, Peter Hall, John Osborne, Benn W. Levy, Wolf Mankowitz, Sir John Gielgud, Harold Hobson and George Devine. £2,300 ($6,440) debt remains. This is a crushing burden on the Pike. We believe that this courageous management, whose theatre seats only fifty-two spectators, deserves assistance from all friends of the Irish theatre and of freedom everywhere. For many reasons little more help can be expected to be given in Dublin.

Under the management of Captain Simpson and Miss Carolyn Swift, the Pike has presented to Dublin and the world the first productions of several new playwrights including Ireland's most impressive new dramatist, Brendan Behan. It was the first company to do Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* in English. As well as offering plays that have gone on to impress audiences in New York and London, the Pike has presented excellent productions of Tennessee Williams, Sartre, Ionesco and other important contemporary writers. It has also delighted Dublin with its satirical late-night revues. In short, the tiny theatre on Herbert Lane has proved itself one of the few genuinely vital forces in the present Irish theatre.

That the Pike is endangered should be of concern to all interested in the theatre. That it is in Ireland, far from America, matters little: the theatre is an international confraternity in which all playhouses are neighbors.

The need is urgent. Contributions towards the $6,440 needed may be sent to the Secretary, The Pike Theatre Fund, 22 East 89th Street, New York 28, N. Y.

Yours faithfully,

EDWARD MULHARE
FRANK O'CONNOR
KEVIN SULLIVAN
ERIC BENTLEY
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DENIS JOHNSTON
VIVIAN MERCIER
DERK KINNANE,
Secretary

EDITORS:

When the Baby Dodds chapters appeared in *Evergreen Review*, I'd hoped than one quarterly had finally awakened to the *effect* of jazz on most of us (even those who do not or will not hear). The succeeding issues, however, have been without jazz. I hope that in this respect you haven't fallen back to the standard *Hudson, Kenyon, Partisan*, etc., position that jazz, if it does really exist, is at best a one-scene raree show. There are more dimensions to jazz and how it exercises influence than have begun to be written about anywhere. Including *Evergreen Review*.

NAT HENTOFF

The Editors welcome letters from readers of *Evergreen Review*.

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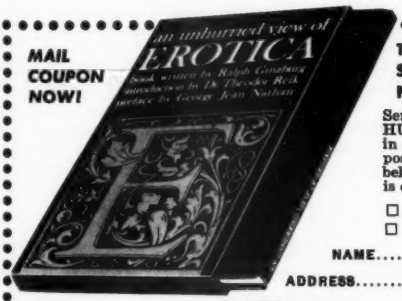

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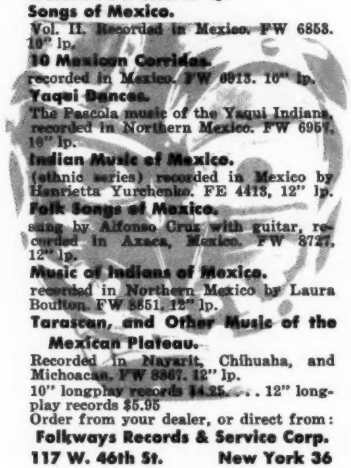

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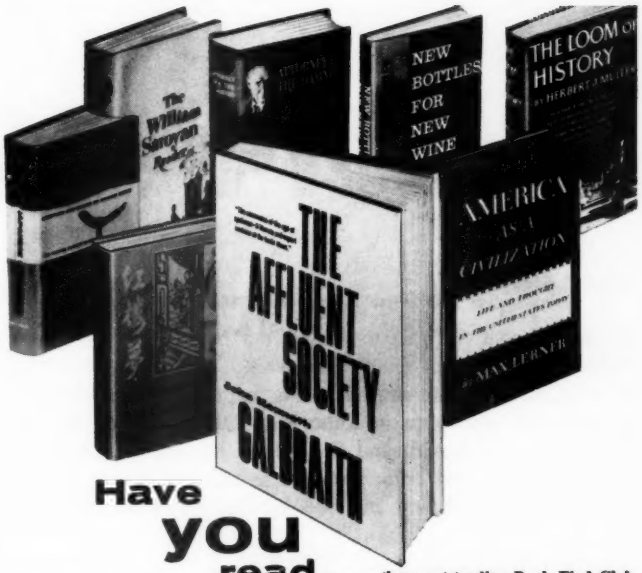

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contributors:

Representative of India to the United Nations, ANAND LALL has represented India at many conferences, and has held a number of important administrative posts in the Government of his country. He was born in Lahore in 1911, and educated at the Universities of Punjab and Oxford. In his spare time he writes fiction, poetry, and book reviews; his second novel, *Seasons of Jupiter,* was published in 1958 by Harper & Brothers.

Evergreen Review No. 7 presents a selective cross section of recent work by the younger generation of Mexican painters, poets, and prose writers. Of the many gifted creators of contemporary Mexican culture we have had to limit our choice to fifteen writers, and to but two of the painters who have come into prominence since the war: José Luis Cuevas and Juan Soriano. Rather than attempt a survey of the rich field of modern Mexican architecture, we have limited our showing to the imaginative shell forms of Felix Candela. The poems have been translated with considerable freedom by Paul Blackburn, Lysander Kemp, Denise Levertov, and William Carlos Williams, who have been more concerned with re-creation in English than with completely literal translation.

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(*Continued on p. 253*)